NATION

50 IAS, IPS officers bought land in Bhopal on same day

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BUSINESS

Govt approves Rs 37,500 crore coal gasification scheme

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SPORTS

PBKS look to arrest slide against MI

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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UNFILTERED

I don't think about Americans' financial situation. I don't think about anybody. I think about one thing, we cannot let Iran have a nuclear weapon. That's all

—**Donald Trump**, US President

Import duty on gold, silver more than doubled to curb imports

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The government sharply raised import tariffs on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent on Wednesday, as it tried to curb non-essential imports and conserve foreign exchange reserves strained by higher oil and fertiliser purchases amid the West Asia conflict.

The hike follows a rare weekend appeal from Prime Minister Modi to postpone gold purchases, non-essential foreign visits and to conserve oil.

India is the world's second-largest consumer of precious metals, which has seen a rally in prices in recent months because of an unabated rise in demand, including investment purposes. Gold is India's second-largest commodity import after crude oil, and rising purchases have added to foreign-exchange outflows, pressuring the rupee to record lows.

- Sources said the West Asia war in WILL balloon India's import bill, and the government wants to prioritise forex expenditure towards essential imports.

The higher tariffs are expected to push up domestic prices of gold and silver.

Effective 13 May, the import duty on gold and silver has been increased to 15 per cent from 6 per cent, and that on platinum to 15.4 per cent from 6.4 per cent. Consequential changes have also been made to other items like gold/silver dore, coins, findings, etc.

Gold and silver imports jumped 26.7 per cent year-on-year to USD 102.5 billion in FY2025-26, with their share in total imports rising to 14 per cent from 11.8 per cent in 2024-25. The duty hike came days after Prime Minister Modi's call for curbs on gold purchases, along with other austerity measures to reduce avoidable foreign exchange expenditure. *— PTI*

Mother Dairy, Amul hike milk prices by Rs 2/litre

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation, which sells products under the Amul brand, on Wednesday hiked milk prices by Rs 2 per litre across India, from May 14, due to rising input costs. The milk price hike is likely to impact food inflation and pinch the budget of middle-class consumers. The last price increase was effected on 1 May, 2025. Meanwhile, reports said that Mother Dairy has also hiked milk prices by Rs 2 per litre effective from Thursday to partly offset rising input costs. Mother Dairy said it has revised the consumer prices of its liquid milk variants by Rs 2 per litre, effective 14 May, 2026. "The revision has been necessitated in view of the sustained increase in farmer procurement prices, of around 6 per cent over the past one year, despite continued efforts to limit the impact on consumers," the statement said. *–PTI*

Meta launches WhatsApp 'incognito' mode

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

Meta Platforms said on Wednesday that it is rolling out an "incognito" mode for WhatsApp users to have private conversations with its AI chatbot, a move intended to ease privacy concerns about sensitive information that users share in chats. The social media company said in a blog post that incognito chat mode provides a way to have private, temporary conversations with Meta AI, its artificial intelligence assistant that's been available on WhatsApp for a few years. Messages will be processed in a "secure environment" that even Meta can't access, won't be saved by default and will disappear when exiting a session, Meta said. Users will only be able to type in questions and get text responses; they won't be able to upload or generate images. They'll also have to confirm their age because Meta doesn't allow users under 13 on its platforms. *–PTI*

Gastroenteritis outbreak: 1,700 on cruise in France

PARIS, 13 MAY

French authorities have confined more than 1,700 passengers and crew aboard the British cruise ship Ambition in Bordeaux after an outbreak of gastrointestinal illness. The vessel, operated by Ambassador Cruise Line, was midway through a 14-night cruise from Belfast and Liverpool when up to 50 passengers developed symptoms consistent with acute digestive infection. Disembarkation was suspended on advice of regional health authorities. Officials stressed there is no link to a separate hantavirus outbreak on the MV Hondius. Ambassador Cruise Line said one 92-year-old passenger died on Sunday. *–PTI*

GBA polls: B'luru gets 'Bhoo Guarantee'

Get B to A Khata converted in 100 days, says DKS

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Wednesday announced the "Bhoo Guarantee" scheme aimed at delivering digitised property records to nearly 23 lakh property owners in Bengaluru, along with a one-time settlement window to convert B Khata properties into A Khata. This is available for 100 days.

Speaking at a press conference, Shivakumar said every property would be drone GPS-mapped and linked with Aadhaar details, along with site photographs and owner photographs.

The records would be physically delivered to at least 23 lakh properties by government officials and representatives associated with guarantee schemes, while online download facilities would also be provided.

Shivakumar, who hold the Bengaluru Development portfolio, said the "historic decision" comes as the government had already digitised over 7,000 property-related files to prevent tampering, duplication and manipulation of land records.

"Nanna Khata, Nanna Hakku" (My Khata, My Right) -- we will deliver property documents with complete records to the doorsteps of citizens," he said.

We've made arrangements so that nobody gets an opportunity to take even one rupee as bribe —DK Shivakumar, DyCM

A Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) press release stated that "this reform benefits approximately 1.4 crore citizens of Bengaluru by reducing unnecessary office visits and providing faceless services".

Shivakumar also announced that people seeking to convert their B Khata to A Khatas can pay only two per cent of the guidance value, instead of the existing five per cent. A-khata refers to genuine properties, while B-Khata is a temporary record that means the owner is paying property taxes, but lacks full legal compliance.

Shivakumar said the City has around 16 lakh A Khata properties and nearly 7 lakh B Khata properties. Breaking it down, he said that for a property worth Rs 1 crore, the earlier charge would have been Rs 5 lakh, but now it would be Rs 2 lakh. He said that special camps will be organised every Saturday for three months starting 16 May across 50 places in every Assembly constituency to process applications. *—Salar news*

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'SECULAR, INCLUSIVE'

K'taka allows janivara, hijab in schools, colleges

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

The Karnataka government on Wednesday issued an order permitting students to wear limited traditional and faith-based symbols such as hijab or headscarf, turban, janivara (sacred thread), Shivadhara and rudraksha along with prescribed school uniforms in schools and pre-university colleges across the state.

The decision replaces the 5 February, 2022 order issued by the previous BJP govern-ment, which had banned hijab in educational institutions.

The Congress-led government said the revised guidelines aim to balance institutional discipline with secular and constitutional values, while ensuring equal access to educa-tion. It stated that no student should be denied admission or discriminated against for wearing permitted religious or cultural symbols, provided they do not affect discipline, safety or identification.

The order emphasised that education is a key instrument for holistic development, promoting constitutional values, scientific temper, rational thinking, equality, dignity, fraternity and social harmony. It added that secularism, in the constitutional sense, im-plies equal respect, institutional neutrality and non-discriminatory conduct rather than opposition to personal beliefs.

—ANI/FREEPIK-AI

It further directed that no student should be denied entry to classrooms, examinations or academic activities for wearing permitted symbols.

School Education Minister Madhu Bangarappa said the order covers all recognised reli-gious and customary practices, including turbans, janeu, Shivadhara, traditional attire in North Karnataka, Jain customs and hijab, ensuring uniform application up to Class 12.

Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said the move ensures "limited customary practices are being allowed" without hurting sentiments.

However, BJP leader R Ashoka criticised the decision, alleging "vote-bank politics" and "appeasement", calling it anti-Hindu. "In Bengal, Mamata Banerjee indulged in this kind of appeasement and suffered politically. MK Stalin, who spoke against Hindus, also faced defeat. In Kerala too, leaders who looked down upon Hindus lost out. Whoever criticises Hindus, the entire Hindu community is standing united and teaching them a lesson," he said. *—PTI*

SUMMIT STARTS TODAY

West Asia war, energy crisis to dominate BRICS

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

India will host a two-day meeting of BRICS foreign ministers from Thursday, with the esca-lating West Asia war and its impact on global energy supply chains expected to dominate discussions.

Iran confirmed that Foreign Minister **Abbas Araghchi** will attend the conclave in New Delhi, marking the first high-level visit from Tehran since the outbreak of the US-Israel conflict involving Iran on 28 February.

Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said the UAE was delaying consensus within BRICS on the West Asia war, while adding that Tehran would welcome any Indian initiative aimed at restoring peace.

Meanwhile, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will skip the meeting to remain in Beijing during US President Donald Trump's visit to China. China's envoy to India, Xu Feihong, would attend. BRICS is an 11-member grouping comprising Brazil, China, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Russia, Saudi, South Africa and UAE. *—PTI*

AIADMK cross-voting jacks up TVK tally in TN Assembly to 144

CHENNAI, 13 MAY

The four-day-old TVK government in Tamil Nadu on Wednesday comfortably won a trust vote, securing a 144:22 margin with the support of 25 rebel AIADMK MLAs amid Opposition allegations of horse-trading, which Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay rejected.

The DMK, with 59 MLAs in the 234-member Assembly, staged a walkout, while PMK with four MLAs and the lone BJP member abstained. Opposition parties accused the govern-ment of inducements, which it denied.

In the vote, 22 AIADMK MLAs aligned with party chief Edappadi K. Palaniswami voted against the government, while 25 MLAs from the CV Shanmugam–SP Velumani faction supported it, as previously announced. The split marked a major internal setback for AIADMK. Vijay said his government would remain secular and continue wel-fare schemes initiated by previous administrations. The trust vote also saw backing from Congress, VCK, Left, IUML and MLA S. Kamaraj, ex-pelled from AMMK for supporting TVK. Minutes before voting, Palaniswami had directed his MLAs to oppose the motion, but the Velumani–Shanmugam group defied the whip and voted for TVK. *—PTI*

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CM Joseph Vijay speaks in the Assembly during floor test in Chennai–*PTI*

AMID IRAN WAR

AI cuts 100 weekly int'l flights

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Air India will cut nearly 100 overseas flights and temporarily suspend services on seven routes, including Delhi–Chicago, as it grapples with rising costs, airspace restrictions and record-high jet fuel prices. The move will reduce up to 27 per cent of the loss-making carri-er's international capacity.

Air India reported a loss exceeding Rs 22,000 crore in FY2025–26, with jet fuel accounting for up to 55–60 per cent of operating costs.

The airline said long-haul operations have become increasingly unviable due to

rerouting over restricted airspace and elevated fuel costs. The revised schedule will remain in force during the June–August period.

Routes suspended include Delhi–Chicago, Mumbai–New York, Delhi–Shanghai, Chennai–Singapore, Mumbai–Dhaka and Delhi–Malé. Air India said the rationalisation aims to im-prove network stability and avoid last-minute cancellations.

Key reductions include lower frequencies on Delhi–San Francisco, Toronto and Vancouver, while Mumbai–Newark will operate daily. Europe routes such as Paris, Rome, Zurich, Vien-na, Milan and Copenhagen will be reduced, and Australia services will drop from daily to four weekly.Passengers will be offered rebooking, alternative travel or refunds.

Meanwhile, the European Union energy commissioner said jet fuel supply is not under immediate threat but warned a longer-term shortage cannot be ruled out. *—Salar News*

MODI, SHAH CUT DOWN CONVOY SIZE

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has significantly reduced his convoy size days after appealing for restraint in fuel use and greater frugality.

On Sunday he made a seven-point appeal to citizens urging austerity measures such as using public transport and carpooling to conserve fuel amid global supply disruptions linked to the West Asia crisis.

Critics questioned the move, noting that the Prime Minister had undertaken roadshows after urging the public to save petrol and diesel.

Viral videos showed him travelling with only two vehicles—a Range Rover and a Fortuner—rather than the usual 12–15-plus vehicle cavalcade, with another clip showing a larger convoy after he had called for fuel savings.

Sources said he also asked for electric vehicles to be included in the convoy where possible, without making new purchases.

Following this, Union Home Minister Amit Shah also reduced his convoy, with visuals showing him leaving his residence in a smaller motorcade aligned with the Prime Minister's call.

Officials said efficiency was being prioritised. *—PTI*

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NEET leak: CBI arrests 5; searches on across nation

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The CBI arrested five persons and is conducting searches at locations across the country in connection with the NEET UG paper leak case, officials said Wednesday.

The agency has arrested three people from Jaipur, one from Gurugram, and one from Nashik, while other suspects are being questioned in various cities and may be arrested later.

Among those arrested, 30-year-old Shubham Khairnar from Nashik is being brought to Delhi for questioning after a local magistrate court granted the CBI a transit remand for him. Nashik Police detained Khairnar on Tuesday after a request from the Rajasthan Police.

After taking over the investigation on Tuesday, the CBI is conducting searches at multiple locations across the country based on leads, they said.

The CBI has seized several digital devices, including mobile phones and laptops, from the suspects, which will be sent for forensic examination to trace messaging applications that may have been used to circulate the examination papers, they said. *—PTI*

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Headmaster dies after bike falls into ditch in Chitradurga

CHITRADURGA, 13 MAY

A school headmaster died and another person was seriously injured after their bike allegedly fell into a roadside ditch in this district on Wednesday, police said. The deceased Premkumar, 45, of Rampura village in Molakalmuru taluk, was serving as the headmaster at Basaveshwara Rural High School in BG Kere village, police said. The accident occurred when the bike allegedly fell into a roadside ditch at a curve on the road connecting Rayadurg in Andhra Pradesh to Rampura. The injured person has been identified as Ramanjaneya of Pakkurthi village. As he sustained severe injuries, he has been admitted to VIMS Hospital in Ballari for treatment, a senior police officer said. *—SALAR NEWS*

GBA eases building deviation limits

DKS to do groundbreaking ceremony for tunnel road, sets 18 months deadline

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

The Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA) has eased the building deviation limit in setbacks, coverage, FAR, and height, from 5 per cent to 15 per cent, making it easier for people to get Occupancy Certificates (OC).

In a press statement on Wednesday, the GBA statement that draft amendments on the same were released last month after the Supreme Court ordered that that electricity and water connections can't be provided to buildings without an OC.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar clarified that the relaxation is mainly intended to regularise smaller sites and enable residents to obtain water and electricity connections, bringing more properties into the legal framework

Shivakumar, who also holds the Bengaluru Development Portfolio, also announced certain relief measures relating to BDA properties.

Earlier provisions, which were introduced during the previous BJP government had been met with poor response, with only around 570 beneficiaries availing the scheme despite eligibility extending to more than 1 lakh property holders, he said.

Under the revised settlement structure, applicants will receive a 50 per cent reduction in existing charges under various slabs. Properties earlier required a 10 per cent payment of the guidance value will now pay five per cent, while those under 25 per cent, 40 per cent and 50 per cent slabs will now pay 12.5 per cent, 20 per cent and 25 per cent respectively.

Greater Bengaluru Authority workers dig up Lavelle Road for developmental work, which will affect residents and commuters for weeks in Bengaluru—*SALAR*

INFRASTRUCTURE BOOST

Shivakumar said the government is pushing major tunnel road and elevated corridor projects to address Bengaluru's traffic congestion. "This month-end itself, I am doing bhoomi puja. We have directed that these works should be completed within 18 months."

He said a twin tunnel corridor will be developed from Hebbal junction, while another elevated corridor will extend up to Mekhri Circle. He also said that alternative diversions, flyovers and underpasses are being planned to ease congestion at Hoskote, Nelamangala and airport corridors. Regarding the Bengaluru Business Corridor project, Shivakumar said that landowners had been offered one of the most attractive compensation packages in the country. "At no cost will we de-notify this."

Shivakumar also reported that over 1,077 km of roads in Nadaprabhu Kempegowda Layout, built at a cost of Rs 631 crore, will soon be opened to the public.

Under the pretext of giving a 'gift' to the people of Bengaluru, the Congress government has found another new avenue for corruption. The 'Nanna Khate, Nanna Hakku' is nothing new. It is complete drama. This government, which lacks the competence to fill road potholes, is lying by saying they've spent Rs 1 lakh for each pothole. Fearing the BBMP elections, Congress is hatching a conspiracy to postpone the elections

-Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, LoP in the Council

Posters near the KPCC office in Bengaluru, projecting DK as the 'next CM' —*ANI*

APARTMENTS IN WHITEFIELD

Shivakumar said that registration for newly constructed BDA apartments in Whitefield would open from 15 May.

He said a 760 sq ft one-bedroom flat would cost Rs 51 lakh, while three-bedroom units of 1,733 sq ft will be about Rs 1.44 crore, with pricing around Rs 6,686 and Rs 8,309 per sq ft respectively. Registrations will be done online.

—Salar with Agencies

Seer booked under POCSO for 'abusing' minor

HARIHAR, 13 MAY

A case under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act has been registered against Vachanananda Swamiji of the Harihar Panchamasali Peetha in connection with allegations of abuse of a minor boy. Allegations had surfaced that children staying in the mutt hostel were being made to give massages to the seer. Following the claims, the boy's mother filed a complaint at the Lakshmeshwar police station in Gadag district, based on which an FIR was registered. The FIR initially filed at Lakshmeshwar police station has now been transferred to the Harihar Rural Police Station, as the alleged incident falls under its jurisdiction. Police have recorded the statements of the complainant and are continuing inquiry into the matter. *—SALAR NEWS*

NSUI protests across State against NEET cancellation

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

NSUI members, the Congress' student wing, held a series of protests across the State, condemning the cancellation of the NEET examination following the alleged question paper leak.

National Students' Union of India (NSUI) protesters, in Bengaluru, Mysuru, Chikkaballapura, Hubballi, Raichur and Bagalkot, accused authorities of failing to safeguard the integrity of the national entrance test.

"If the authorities are unable to conduct even a single national-level eligibility examination properly, it raises serious questions about the credibility of the entire examination system," an NSUI leader said, describing the paper leak episode as deeply embarrassing for the country's education system.

NSUI leaders said large numbers of party workers participated in the protests, while some activists were detained during demonstrations in different districts. Participants said the cancellation of the exam and proposed re-examination had triggered severe stress and uncertainty among aspirants, and argued that students should not be penalised for lapses allegedly committed by institutions.

"One mistake by a few people has affected students across the country. Aspirants have invested an entire year preparing for the exam, and now they are being forced to undergo the stress all over again," a protesting student said.

They highlighted the mental stress aspirants face when preparing and writing entrance exams.

"A sudden re-exam creates anxiety and uncertainty for lakhs of families," another student said.

In the capital, the NSUI members protested outside Chikkaballapur BJP MP K Sudhakar's home, who served has the medical education minister during his party's government. *—PTI*

NSLUI students protest overpacked hostels, water crisis in campus

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

Several students of Bengaluru's National Law School of India University (NLSIU) have been protesting since the night of 12 May over alleged severe water shortage on campus and overcrowded hostels.

According to NLSIU Student Bar Association (SBA), erratic water supply has persisted for several days. Students said they were "forced to live in inhumane conditions", adding that complaints had been ignored for months without concrete action. The immediate trigger for the protest was a prolonged lack of water in the Women's Hostel, which students said severely disrupted daily routines. Students also raised concerns over hostel allocation disparities, stating that the Women's Hostel has 93 bunk-bed rooms compared to 18 in the Men's Hostel. They described the rooms as "match-box-sized". *—Agencies*

MOCK DRILLS AT SOUDHA

NSG personnel conduct a mock drill at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Wednesday, simulating a terror attack response —*PTI*

11 booked for attempt to attack Speaker Khader

MANGALURU, 13 MAY

- The complaint lodged by Mohammad Yaseen, the gunman of the Speaker, says some people intercepted the speaker's convoy in front of the Bapuni government guest house.

An FIR has been registered against 11 persons in connection with an alleged attempt to attack Karnataka Assembly Speaker UT Khader during a protest in Dakshina Kannada district, police said on Wednesday.

The incident occurred on 7 May when Khader's convoy was in the Ullal area near Mangaluru, they said.

A group of protesters allegedly tried to block the convoy and raised slogans against him, police said.

The complaint lodged by Mohammad Yaseen, the gunman of the Speaker, says some people intercepted the speaker's convoy in front of the Bapuni government guest house. They demanded that they be allowed to talk to the speaker regarding some civic issue.

As it was 10.30 pm, "I did not permit them to meet the speaker," Yaseen said in his complaint.

Police said the protesters were upset over remarks allegedly made by Khader during a recent public event.

Based on the complaint, Ullal police registered an FIR against Junaid, a resident of Madani Nagar and 10 persons under the BNS, including unlawful assembly and obstruction of a public servant from discharging official duties, a police officer said. *— PTI*

Ashoka flags increasing number of cases against cops

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

Citing reports about large-scale suspensions and criminal cases against police officers in the State, Leader of Opposition in the Assembly R Ashoka alleged that there was a complete breakdown of law and order.

In a statement issued by his office, Ashoka asked, "Why do ordinary people fear more than criminals?... Has the police department lost discipline, morality, and public trust and sunk into the mire of corruption?"

On the 713 police officers' alleged suspension, Ashoka stated, "Such a large number of suspensions in just two years is not the personal fault of a few. It is proof that the entire system has collapsed."

Regarding criminal cases against 95 officers, "If those who should protect people are involved in serious crimes, whom should ordinary citizens trust?"

The statement alleged that Bengaluru had become "the hub of corruption" claiming that "most of the suspended officers are from Bengaluru".

He noted that more than 400 officers have been proven guilty in departmental inquiries, saying that such hirings reflected a complete bankruptcy of the Home Department. *—ANI*

4 held for robbing man of Rs 7.5 L after throwing chilli powder at him

CHIKKABALLAPUR, 13 MAY

Four men have been arrested for allegedly robbing Rs 7.5 lakh from a man in Chikkaballapur by throwing chilli powder into his eyes and threatening him with a machete, police said on Wednesday. The incident occurred on Monday in Vinayakanagar area of Gauribidanur.

The victim, Shivashankara Aradhya, filed a complaint at Gauribidanur Town Police Station. Police said they recovered the entire stolen amount, along with a car and motorcycle allegedly used in the crime.

The accused — Yashwanth, Darshan, Bharath and Vishakantamurthy — were arrested within three hours of the incident. According to police, Aradhya, who runs an eatery, had raised Rs 14 lakh by selling family jewellery to start a travel business. He was carrying Rs 7.5 lakh in cash to purchase a vehicle when two unidentified men on a motorcycle attacked him, threw chilli powder into his eyes, threatened him with a machete and fled with money. *—Salar News*

MCC HIKES SHOP RENTALS AFTER 23 YEARS

MYSURU, 13 MAY

The Mysuru City Corporation (MCC) has revised shop rentals after a gap of 23 years in a move aimed at boosting municipal revenue. The revised rates will come into effect next month.

The MCC has increased rents for 1,980 shops located across major commercial streets, markets and civic buildings in Mysuru, including Devaraja Market, Vani Vilas Market, Visvesvaraya Building, Kalidasa Road and Mandi Mohalla Market.

Under the new structure, shops earlier paying around Rs 1,500 per month will now pay between Rs 15,000 and Rs 20,000, plus 18 per cent GST. Smaller interior shops paying Rs 750 to Rs 1,000 will see revised rents ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 15,000 depending on location and size. Units that were earlier paying as low as Rs 200 to Rs 300 will now pay around Rs 1,500 per month.

To address the issue of sub-leasing, the MCC has also fixed a uniform rent of Rs 27,000 for shops found to have been illegally rented out to third parties at higher rates.

Officials said the revision follows consultations with traders and tenants' associations. The corporation had last attempted a rent revision in 2014–15 based on land values, but the move was stalled due to protests from shop owners. *—Salar News*

1978-2026

Actor Dileep Raj dies of heart attack

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

Kannada film actor, producer and entrepreneur Dileep Raj died at the age of 47 after suffering a heart attack on Wednesday, film industry sources said. He was rushed to a nearby hospital in Bengaluru after complaining of unease, but did not respond to the treatment.

Dileep has been a mainstay in the Kannada entertainment industry for over two decades, making his screen debut with the 2005 film 'Boyfriend' before expanding into television and production.

He gained recognition for playing the antagonist opposite the late Puneeth Rajkumar in the 2005 film 'Milana'. Most recently, he portrayed a lawyer in 'Love Mocktail 3', released in March 2026.

Dileep has been a mainstay in the Kannada entertainment industry for over two decades —*PTI*

Over the years, Dileep has dominated Kannada cinema and television through films, serials, theatre, production, and dubbing work. He featured in several Kannada films, including 'U Turn' in 2016 and the 2023 musical drama 'Orchestra Mysuru'. On Kannada television, he appeared in soaps such as the self-produced 'Hitler Kalyana'.

Following the news of his death, members of the Kannada film industry paid tribute.

Actor Rishab Shetty wrote on X: "A good actor, director, producer, and above all, a good human being..The impression of your personality remains firmly in my heart...May your soul rest in peace." The late actor is survived by his wife and two children. *—Agencies*

Metro brings surge of housing demand to East City: Report

BENGALURU, 13 MAY

East Bengaluru has emerged as the City's most active residential market, with developers increasing in Whitefield, Gunjur, Budigere Cross amid demand for IT professionals and Metro connectivity.

The eastern corridor accounts for 57 per cent of Bengaluru's residential launches seeing launch of 12,664 housing units, according to consultancy Cushman & Wakefield latest report.

It added that East, south-east and north sub markets continued to record growth in capital values. Average city-wide rentals appreciated by 1-2 per cent on a quarterly basis and 4-5 per cent on an annual basis. *—ANI*

YOUTH POWER

Karnataka Energy Minister KJ George attended the 13th scholarship distribution ceremony of the Indian Academy Degree College in Bengaluru on Wednesday, where he said India's progress depends on an educated and enlightened youth. He stressed that youth power drives national development and urged students to dream big, saying discipline and purpose can turn aspirations into reality —*SALAR*

— PTI

Rangasamy takes oath as Puducherry Chief Minister

CHENNAI, 13 MAY

Veteran political leader and AINRC founder N Rangasamy on Wednesday took oath as the Chief Minister of Puducherry for the fifth time.

Two other cabinet members--Malladi Krishna Rao from the regional party and A Namassivayam of the BJP, also took oath as ministers in the AINRC-led NDA government. Lt Governor K Kailashnathan administered the oath of office and secrecy to the CM and his cabinet colleagues. Rangasamy took oath in the name of God. Rao took oath in Telugu. He represents Yanam, an enclave of Puducherry in Andhra Pradesh. BJP national president Nitin Nabin and senior leader BL Santhosh were present on the dais. —*PTI*

Cong to announce Kerala CM pick on Thursday

Congress party high comand has completed the discussion

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The Congress will announce its chief ministerial pick in Kerala on Thursday, the party said here after days of suspense, intense lobbying and marathon discussions.

After an almost 40-minute meeting between Rahul Gandhi and Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge at the latter's residence, party general secretary Jairam Ramesh said the decision on the next Kerala chief minister will be announced tomorrow as the party high command has completed all discussions in this regard.

The suspense over the party's pick would end 10 days after the results of the assembly elections were declared. The Congress-led United Democratic Front (UDF) had won over two-thirds majority in the Kerala Assembly polls.

"As authorised by the members of the CLP in Kerala, the high command of the Congress has completed all discussions, and the decision on who the next chief minister of Kerala will be will be announced tomorrow," Ramesh said.

V D Satheesann, K C Venugopal, Ramesh Chennithala —*PTI*

All democratic practices and processes will be followed in announcing the chief minister's name, a senior leader, who did not wish to be named, said, indicating that the CM nominee may be revealed in Kerala.

AICC general secretary for organisation, K C Venugopal, Leader of Opposition in the outgoing Kerala assembly, V D Satheesan, and senior party, leader Ramesh Chennithala are among those in the race for the post.

The party has been grappling with its chief ministerial pick and has held several rounds of discussions with local leaders and former party chiefs in the state.

Rahul Gandhi had previously met several leaders from Kerala and around eight former state unit chiefs to ascertain the ground situation.

Protests at the ground level by party workers had prompted the party leadership to hold discussions with state leaders before finalising the next chief minister.

Congress' allies in the UDF favour Satheesan, who also enjoys huge support. —*PTI*

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma chairs the first cabinet meeting following the formation of the state government in Guwahati —*PTI*

Assam cabinet clears UCC

GUWAHATI, 13 MAY

The Assam Cabinet on Wednesday approved the implementation of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in the state, but the tribal population will be kept outside its purview, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said.

The UCC Bill will be laid before the new legislative assembly on May 26, the chief minister said at a press conference here after chairing the first cabinet meeting of his second term as the head of the government.

"This is a major decision taken in the first cabinet meeting and aligns with the commitment we made during the elections," he said.

Sarma said Uttarakhand, Goa and Gujarat have already implemented the UCC, but his government has customised it for the requirements of Assam.

"We have completely exempted the tribal population from the purview of UCC. All rituals, traditions and customs practised by the people of Assam outside the scope of UCC," he said.

The UCC will deal with succession, marriage, live-in relationships and compulsory registration of marriage and divorce, he added. —*PTI*

'Bihar minister did not speak against girls' education'

PATNA, 13 MAY

A video of Bihar education minister Mithilesh Tiwari going viral on social media allegedly says that he said girls do not need education. Tiwari had assumed charge as Bihar's education minister on 9 May 2026. But a search of YouTube found a detailed report uploaded on the YouTube channel of News4Nation on 9 May 2026. The report contains the full media interaction of Bihar education minister Mithilesh Tiwari, a clipped portion of which is now being circulated on social media. Watching the full media interaction makes it clear that the viral claim is false. The conversation in the video was not about "education" but about the "agitation" by candidates protesting against the BPSC TRE 4 examination. Tiwari said, "What is the need for an agitation? Why daughters have to come out when Modi stands for women's empowerment?" —*AGENCIES*

Bengal CM to retain Bhabanipur seat

KOLKATA, 13 MAY

West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari announced on Wednesday that he will retain the Bhabanipur Assembly segment and give up Nandigram.

He won both the Bhabanipur and Nandigram and took oath in as an MLA from Bhabanipur on Wednesday.

"Someone else will be elected as MLA from Nandigram (in a bypoll). But I will not let the people there feel my absence during the next five years. I will fulfil all development promises," he told reporters.

Referring to the 2009-2016 tenure of Phiroja Bibi as a TMC MLA from Nandigram he said, "I had provided all support to her, the mother of a martyr. —*PTI*

Puja, fish meal mark new session

The inaugural day of the oath-taking ceremony of the new West Bengal MLAs on Wednesday was marked by a series of unprecedented events, including a puja within the Assembly premises and a state-sponsored fish meal.

The symbolic gestures offered a latent statement on the opposition's pre-poll warnings of a crackdown on people's non-vegetarian food habits by the saffron dispensation. As many as 143 MLAs of the 294-member House, including Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari, were sworn in. —*PTI*

EPS blames cross-voting on lure of posts

CHENNAI, 13 MAY

A section of AIADMK MLAs had cross-voted in favour of the TVK government in its floor test on Wednesday falling to the "lure" of cabinet posts and what they did was "unfair and illegal," party general secretary Edappadi K Palaniswami alleged.

A total of 25 AIADMK MLAs led by senior leaders SP Velumani and C Ve Shanmugam had supported the C Joseph Vijay-led government during its confidence vote.

"We have won 47 assembly seats by highlighting AIADMK's achievement and people's welfare measures from 2011 and the people have voted for the party's Two Leaves symbol", Palaniswami, addressed as EPS, told reporters after the assembly session.

He alleged that the Velumani faction has "betrayed" the functionaries by supporting TVK in the assembly.

C Ve Shanmugam, Edappadi K Palaniswami —*PTI*

"Some have been lured by the promise of cabinet minister posts and they took the others also down the wrong path. This is illegal, against justice," Palaniswami added.

He claimed that even though TVK has formed the government, the AIADMK secured a "big victory" with its 47 MLAs.

He claimed that as general secretary of the party, he had the "right" to appoint the whip.

Meawhile, DMDK General Secretary and MLA Premalatha Vijayakanth lashed out at the TVK-led government during its floor test, describing allegations of horse-trading as a matter of great shame for the state.

Along with DMK MLAs, Premalatha too staged a walkout during the vote of confidence. — *PTI*

> **What are people asking..(why) the ruling party has now aligned with that corrupt force. You promised a clean government Is this the hallmark of your clean governance? People have begun questioning**
>
> -Udhayanidhi Stalin, Tamil Nadu Leader of Opposition,

Suspected killer of Suvendu PA is a BJP leader?

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Questions are being asked on the social media about the identity of one Raj Singh, arrested from UP in connection with the alleged murder of the personal assistant of West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari. It is alleged that Singh is a leader of the BJP. Police said Singh introduced himself on social media as the state general secretary of the Akhil Bharatiya Kshatriya Mahasabha. His online accounts allegedly contain photographs and videos from rallies and public meetings with political leaders from Uttar Pradesh. The police have arrested three men in connection with the case. A court has sent the three to police custody for 13 days. — *AGENCIES*

BJP CMs downsize convoy after PM's austerity appeal

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's convoy downsizing, several BJP chief ministers and senior leaders have announced similar austerity measures across states.

UP Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has ordered an immediate 50 per cent reduction in his convoy and those of ministers, while urging officials and citizens to adopt the PM's call for prudent spending. Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said he would use a minimal convoy and encouraged public transport use, adding that no vehicle rallies would be held and ministers should follow suit.

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta imposed limits on official vehicles for ministers and MLAs, urging residents to use buses, metro services and carpooling. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal directed reduction of convoy size.

Maharashtra CM Fadnavis made prior approval must for air travel. Gujarat Governor Acharya said he would use trains and public transport in the state, while Gujarat Deputy CM Sanghvi cancelled a US visit. —*PTI*

Appointment of astrologer as OSD to CM Vijay revoked

CHENNAI, 13 MAY

The Tamil Nadu government on Wednesday revoked its order appointing Rickey Radhan Pandit Vettrivel, an astrologer, as the Officer on Special Duty (OSD - Political) to Chief Minister C Joseph Vijay.

The decision to withdraw the Government Order (GO) comes less than 24 hours after the appointment was made on Tuesday, following a wave of sharp criticism from political opponents and allies of the Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) alike.

The appointment had sparked a heated debate in the State Assembly earlier in the day. Opposition leaders, including DMDK general secretary Premalatha Vijayakanth, strongly condemned the move on the floor of the House, questioning the induction of an astrologer into a key political administrative role.

Facing mounting pressure and backlash from various quarters, the Vijay-led administration moved quickly to rescind the appointment.

Vettrivel, widely known as an astrologer, had been designated to handle political affairs in the Chief Minister's Office before the government decided to backtrack on the decision.

Official sources confirmed that the GO stands cancelled with immediate effect. Further details on a replacement for the post are yet to be announced.

Meanwhile, addressing a query regarding the controversial appointment of an official previously described as an astrologer, TN Minister R Nirmal Kumar clarified that the individual in question was a long-standing "media spokesperson" for the party. —*PTI*

SC stays order barring TVK MLA from floor

The SC on Wednesday stayed the Madras HC order that had restrained TVK MLA R Sreenivasa Sethupathi from participating in the floor test in the Tamil Nadu assembly, saying such a directive under writ jurisdiction was "atrocious". The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) government in Tamil Nadu crossed the major hurdle on Wednesday, winning a trust vote by a 144:22 margin amid a walkout by the principal opposition DMK and a divided AIADMK whose faction supported the Vijay-led government. While issuing notice on Sethupathi's plea challenging the HC's 12 May order, the SC also stayed the proceedings pending before the high court in the matter. —*PTI*

Sonia Gandhi visits hospital for 'routine' check-up

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Senior Congress leader Sonia Gandhi visited a private hospital in Gurugram on Wednesday for a "routine medical check-up" and has since returned home, confirmed Congress general secretary Jairam Ramesh. According to sources, Gandhi was admitted to the Medanta Institute of Digestive and Hepatobiliary Sciences on Tuesday night. There was no comment from the hospital on the visit. The 79-year-old Rajya Sabha MP from Rajasthan has faced health problems in recent years and has received treatment many times at hospitals, mostly in Delhi. In March, Gandhi was admitted to Delhi's Sir Ganga Ram Hospital after she complained of uneasiness. Rahul, Priyanka were at the hospital.—*AGENCIES*

NATIONALISM OVERDRIVE

RSS launches unit at JU, vows to eliminate Maoism

KOLKATA, 13 MAY

The RSS launched a shakha (branch) at the Jadavpur University (JU) on Tuesday, and some of its members declared that they would "uproot Maoism" from the JU campus.

A group of university employees gathered at the football ground at around 6.30am, took an oath and conducted drills to mark the launch of the RSS shakha.

"Jadavpur University was founded on the mantra of nationalism under the guidance of Rishi Aurobindo. But the university descended into Maoism. We have to uproot Maoism," said Palash Maji, a senior laboratory attendant of the physics department.

During an election rally before the second phase of Bengal polls, Prime Minister Modi had described JU as a hub of "anti-national slogans."

The RSS shakha plans to hold the hour-long assembly on the campus every morning.

The RSS plans to hold its hour-long assembly on the campus every morning. The drills would include 'dand prayog' —*WIKIMEDIA COMMONS*

Maji said the drills would soon include "dand prayog" or lathi khela. "Route marches will follow later," he added.

JU had often drawn criticism from right-wingers over its political activities. Slogans like "Azad Kashmir" and "Stop Operation Kagar" (the Centre's anti-Maoist operation along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border in 2022-23) had appeared on campus walls. A JU professor said the BJP's election victory had encouraged the RSS to assert themselves on the campus.

Leftist students strongly criticised the move.Indranuj Ray, unit president of the ultra-Left Revolutionary Students' Front of JU, said: "The RSS wants to eliminate the Left from the campus because they cannot tolerate those who question their divisive agenda. We will fight them." — Agencies

Akhilesh's half-brother Prateek dies at 38

LUCKNOW, 13 MAY

Prateek Yadav, the younger son of Samajwadi Party founder Mulayam Singh Yadav, has died at the age of 38 after suddenly falling ill in the early hours of Wednesday.

Prateek, a fitness enthusiast who was an entrepreneur, was declared brought dead at the civil hospital here.

Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav expressed his shock. Aparna Bisht Yadav, his wife, is a BJP member and is the vice chairperson of the State Women Commission.

Prateek was the son of Mulayam Singh Yadav and his second wife, Sadhna Gupta. He was around 16 when the two got married.

Prateek died due to "cardio-respiratory collapse caused by massive pulmonary thromboembolism", according to the provisional postmortem report prepared at the King George's Medical University (KGMU) here.

The condition refers to a large blood clot blocking arteries of the lungs, leading to sudden failure of heart and lung functions.

On reports that Prateek was found unconscious in the kitchen, Civil Hospital director Dr GC Gupta said, "I can't say anything for sure." Prateek's wife was apparently out of state.

Prateek was also known to be an animal lover. On 19 January, Prateek openly accused his wife of ruining his family ties. —*PTI*

Samajwadi Party (SP) chief Akhilesh Yadav pays his last respects to the mortal remains of his stepbrother Prateek Yadav, who died at the age of 38 after suddenly falling ill in the early hours of Wednesday —*PTI*

72 IAS officers transferred in Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, 13 MAY

In a major bureaucratic reshuffle, the Gujarat government on Wednesday transferred 72 Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers. Among key changes, Municipal Commissioner of Jamnagar D N Modi was appointed Development Commissioner in Gandhinagar, while Collector of Kutch-Bhuj, Anand Patel, was transferred as Commissioner of Schools in Gandhinagar. Patel was also given additional charge as Commissioner of PM-POSHAN Yojana (Mid-Day Meal) and Director of the Gujarat Council of Education Research and Training (GCERT), said the notification issued by the the General Administration Department. Ahmedabad district Collector Sujeet Kumar was appointed Special Commissioner of State Tax, Ahmedabad. —*PTI*

Food poisoning hits 40 at UP baby shower event

BULANDSHAHR, 13 MAY

Around 40 people fell ill after allegedly consuming contaminated food at a baby shower ceremony in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district, officials said on Wednesday. According to officials, the incident took place in Salgawan village during a function organised on Tuesday night. Anupshahr Sub-Divisional Magistrate Priyanka Goyal said people started complaining of uneasiness after consuming food served at the ceremony. She said police rushed to the spot after receiving information and shifted over 40 affected people first to the primary health centre in Jahangirabad and later to the district hospital. "All the admitted persons are currently in stable condition," the official said. —*PTI*

— *PTI*

Bishnoi gang owns up shooting near Diljit staff's house

CHANDIGARH, 13 MAY

A social media post, allegedly linked to the Lawrence Bishnoi gang resulted in a firing incident outside the residence of Punjabi actor-singer Diljit Dosanjh's manager in Haryana's Karnal. The Haryana Police, however, on Wednesday said, "There is no information from the family side," Karnal Superintendent of Police Narendra Bijarniya said. A police team visited Kang's village, Gonder in Karnal, and as per preliminary investigation, nothing was recovered from the spot, the officer said. In a social media post, Bishnoi's aides, Tyson Bishnoi, Arzoo Bishnoi and Hari Boxer, purportedly took the responsibility for the alleged firing incident. —*PTI*

MBBS student gave NEET paper to his R'than friends

Sikar student studying in Kerala sent the guess paper

JAIPUR, 13 MAY

The origins of a guess paper containing questions similar to those asked in NEET-UG 2026 medical exam were traced to a student from Rajasthan's Sikar studying MBBS in Kerala. He went on to share it with his friends and a hostel owner, a senior official of the state's Special Operation's Group said.

The IG of the Special Operations Group (SOG), Ajay Pal Lamba, said the student first received the material from a friend and shared it with others in Sikar.

The document subsequently reached several coaching centre students and later reached candidates in Jaipur and nearby areas before the exam that was held on 3 May.

Another official said the student from Kerala forwarded the guess paper to a hostel owner in Sikar and some of his friends. The hostel owner shared the guess papers to students living in the hostel, saying it could be helpful.

However, the hostel owner himself later tipped off the local police about the guess paper.

Officials said the material was allegedly routed through a person based in Gurugram before reaching Rajasthan.

Lamba said the findings were shared with the National Testing Agency (NTA), following which the Centre decided to cancel the NEET examination. The case was later taken over by the CBI.

A team from the CBI reached Tuesday at the SOG office to take over the investigation.

A social group named 'Private Mafia' was also found in which the password protected PDF was circulated.

Officials said no direct role of coaching institutes has surfaced in the investigation so far.

Meanwhile, a woman has been detained by the Pune Police due to suspected links with the NEET leak case and was handed over to the CBI, a senior official said on Wednesday.

Pune Police Commissioner Amitesh Kumar, however, refused to elaborate on the woman's role in the question paper leak. — *PTI*

ABVP activists protest against the cancellation of the NEET-UG 2026 exam at the NTA office in New Delhi on Wednesday—PTI

Medical group moves SC for changes in NEET-UG

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

A medical association has moved the Supreme Court alleging "systemic failure" in the conduct of the NEET-UG 2026 exam and sought reforms in the test system.

The NEET (UG) 2026 exam held on 3 May by NTA was cancelled on 12 May amid allegations of question paper leak.

The Federation of All India Medical Association (FAIMA), moved the SC through lawyer Tanvi Dubey seeking a complete overhaul of the national testing framework, including the replacement of the NTA with a more robust body. It urged the SC to direct the Centre to replace the NTA with a "technologically advanced body."

FAIMA also asked the court to constitute a monitoring committee, chaired by a retired SC judge including cybersecurity and forensic experts, to oversee the re-conduct of the 2026 exam. — *PTI*

SABARIMALA CASE

Hinduism way of life, not must to visit temples: SC

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

- The observation of the nine-judge constitution bench headed by the CJI Surya Kant came while hearing petitions regarding discrimination against women at religious places

Observing that Hinduism is a way of life, the Supreme Court said on Wednesday that it is not necessary for a Hindu to mandatorily go to a temple or perform a ritual in order to remain a Hindu and even lighting a lamp inside his house is enough to prove one's faith.

The observation of a nine-judge constitution bench headed by CJI Surya Kant came while hearing petitions related to discrimination against women at religious places, including the Sabarimala temple in Kerala, and on the ambit of religious freedom practised by multiple faiths, including Dawoodi Bohras.

As the hearing commenced on 15th day of hearing of the Sabarimala case, advocate Dr G Mohan Gopal, appearing for one of the intervenors, submitted that there is demand for social justice from within religious communities.

"Hinduism was defined as a religion. Thereafter, in 1966, it was held that a Hindu is one who accepts the Vedas as the highest authority in all matters religion and philosophy. But does every Hindu accept the Vedas as the highest authority in all spiritual and philosophical matters?" he asked.

Responding to his submission, Justice Nagarathna said, "That is why Hinduism is called a way of life. It is not necessary for a Hindu to mandatorily go to a temple or perform a ritual in order to remain a Hindu."She said one need not be ritualistic and nobody can come in the way for people having their faith. The hearing is underway. — *PTI*

M'rashtra ATS raids 40 places, grills 53

MUMBAI, 13 MAY

The Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) carried out raids at around 40 locations across the state on Wednesday, including Mumbai, checking persons who were in contact with Pakistan-based gangster Shahzad Bhatti, officials said.

At least 53 persons were being questioned, they said.

Bhatti, who operated his gang from abroad, was allegedly trying to influence youth in India for anti-national activities through social media, an official said.

The raids were being conducted since morning in Mumbai, Akola, Nanded, Pune, Mira Road (in Thane district), Nallasopara (Palghar district), Nashik, Jalgaon, Nagpur and other places in the state, he said.

The ATS had specific information about suspicious activities of some persons, who were allegedly in contact with Bhatti and his syndicate, he said. Fifty-three such individuals were identified across the state, and inquiries were being conducted after tracing their locations, he said. Last week, investigators found that Pakistan's ISI had allegedly planned attacks on a historic temple in Delhi, a popular dhaba on the Delhi-Sonipat highway and a military camp in Haryana through operatives linked to the Shahzad Bhatti module.

The revelations emerged during the interrogation of nine alleged operatives of the module arrested by the Delhi Police Special Cell under their 'Gang Bust Operation 2.0' from multiple states.

The Delhi Police recently arrested 482 gangsters, including nine operatives linked to Bhatti, during an operation against organised crime syndicates and their networks from 5 to 7 May across the capital, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan and UP. — *PTI*

WAR AGAINST TERROR

NIA arrests narco-terrorist after his extradition from Portugal

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested wanted narco-terrorist Iqbal Singh alias Shera on Wednesday after successfully securing his extradition from Portugal.

He was taken into custody by an NIA team at the Delhi airport immediately after he arrived from Portugal, to where he had fled in 2020. His successful extradition and arrest come as a major shot in the arm for the NIA's fight against Pakistan-backed narco and cross-border terrorism, officials said. During the investigation, the NIA found Shera to be a key conspirator and handler of an India-based narco-terror module engaged in smuggling heroin from Pakistan. A native of Amritsar, Shera had masterminded a conspiracy to smuggle narcotics from Pakistan to Punjab, the NIA said.

NIA said he supervised the trafficking and distribution of the smuggled drugs, and channelised the proceeds through hawala networks to Pakistan and Kashmir-based operatives of Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM).

Shera had a terror gang and operated a Punjab-based network involved in trafficking large quantities of heroin, collecting sale proceeds, and transferring funds to handlers and terror operatives.

The agency said Shera maintained close links with Pakistan-based HM operatives. — *PTI*

NIA officials bring wanted narco-terrorist Iqbal Singh alias Shera (in white) to the Patiala House court in New Delhi—*PTI*

Over 85 pc students clear Class 12 CBSE exams

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The CBSE Class 12 exam results were declared on Wednesday. A senior official announced that over 85 per cent of the candidates have cleared the exams this year.

The results show that the overall pass rate dipped by over three percentage points compared to last year.

Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj confirmed that around 85 per cent of the students have passed the exams.

A total of 94,028 candidates, 5.32 per cent of all examinees, scored 90 per cent and above, while 17,113 candidates (0.97 per cent) scored 95 per cent or more.

He said the number of students placed in compartment rose to 1,63,800 (9.26 per cent) in 2026, up from 1,29,095 (7.63 per cent) in 2025. It means that these students may have failed in one or two subjects in the main board exam but have passed in the other subjects.

Girls once again outperformed boys recording an 88.86 pass percentage, while for boys, it stood at 82.13 per cent.

Students placed in compartment or wishing to improve performance in one subject may appear in the supplementary examination scheduled for 15 July, officials said.

The 'List of Candidates' (LOC) submission window will open on 2 June. Results can be accessed at cbse.gov.in or on DigiLocker. — *PTI*

Security officials conduct rescue operations after a private trainer plane crash landed due to a technical snag in Baramati in Pune district —*PTI*

TRAINER AIRCRAFT CRASHLANDS IN BARAMATI

PUNE, 13 MAY

A trainer aircraft operated by a private company crash landed near the Baramati airstrip in Maharashtra's Pune district after developing a technical snag on Wednesday, police said. A trainee pilot, who was the sole occupant, escaped safely.

The aircraft belonged to the Redbird Flight Training Academy. The company said it is probing the incident.

Aircraft from the same company had been involved in accidents. On 28 January, a private plane belonging to VSR Ventures, carrying then deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar and four others crashed near the Baramati airstrip, killing all.

On Wednesday's incident, Pune SP Sandip Singh Gill told PTI, "As per eyewitnesses, the aircraft was flying at a comparatively low altitude when it developed a technical snag. During the crash landing, one side of the aircraft reportedly hit a light pole before it struck the ground."

Earlier, on 19 October, 2023, a pilot was injured when a trainer aircraft of the company crashed near Katfal village in Baramati taluka.

On 22 October 2023, two people were injured as another trainer aircraft belonging to the same academy crashed near Gojubavi village, close to Baramati. — PTI

50 IAS, IPS officers bought land in Bhopal on same day

BHOPAL, 13 MAY

Fifty civil servants from across the country jointly purchased farmland in Bhopal on the same day in 2022. Two years later the price of that land rose 11 times, according to an investigation by the Dainik Bhaskar newspaper.

The land purchase came to light during a probe into immovable property returns (IPR) filed by officers in MP. Fifty IAS and IPS officers, belonging to MP, Maharashtra, Telangana and Haryana cadres bought land in the Guradi Ghat village of Bhopal's Kolar area in April 2022. Just 16 months after the land deal, a 3200-crore Western Bypass project was approved through the area. Ten months later, the land use was changed from agricultural to residential.

No housing society has been registered for the project so far. Rules dictate that the land must either be transferred to a registered society or plots must be officially allotted before any residential development begins. — *Agencies*

The land purchase came out during a probe into immovable property returns (IPR) filed by government officials in MP —*AI*

Semi-high-speed rail line costing Rs 20,667 cr cleared

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved the construction of a 134-km semi-high-speed double rail line between Ahmedabad and Dholera in Gujarat at an estimated cost of around Rs 20,667 crore.

The project will be Indian Railways' first semi-high-speed corridor planned with indigenously developed technology.

"The project section will provide faster connectivity between Ahmedabad, Dholera SIR (Special Investment Region), upcoming Dholera Airport, and Lothal National Maritime Heritage Complex (NHMC)," according to an official statement.

Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR) in Gujarat is a greenfield industrial smart city, envisioned as a global hub for industrail manufacturing, innovation, and urban living. — *PTI*

'BREATHTAKING IRONY'

Rajasthan HC blasts axing of Khejri trees

JODHPUR, 13 MAY

Decrying the proposed felling of Khejri trees for solar power projects as a "stark example" of environmental destruction in the name of technological progress, the Rajasthan High Court expressed the hope that the state-appointed committee on tree protection would explore every alternative to prevent the loss of "even a single tree."

Justices Arun Monga and Sandeep Shah made the observations while disposing of a PIL filed by an NGO, Shri Jambeshwar Paryavaran and Jeev Raksha Pradesh Sanstha, seeking protection of Khejri trees in Rajasthan.

The bench said that no trees should be felled without prior approval in accordance with law.

Referring to the ecological significance of the Khejri (Prosopis cineraria), the court observed that the rare desert tree grows in the arid region.

Khejri trees are among the few species naturally able to survive the harsh Rajasthan desert climate—*WIKIMEDIACOMMONS*

"The irony is breathtaking," the bench said and asked whether society was destroying nature in the name of technology.

The PIL had sought directions to stop the alleged illegal cutting of trees, particularly Khejri trees, without due procedure.

Appearing for the petitioner, counsel Vijay Bishnoi submitted that Khejri trees were among the few species naturally suited to survive the harsh desert climate.

During the proceedings, the state informed the court that it had already taken cognisance of the matter and constituted a special committee to deal with it through an order dated 9 March 2026.

- An environmental study in Bikaner district found that 5 lakh native trees, mostly Khejri, were felled in the district

An environmental study in Bikaner district revealed that approximately 5 lakh native trees—mostly Khejri—have been cleared in the district in the last 14 years.

In Bhanipura village, farmers estimate that 10,000 Khejri trees have been cleared since 2024 to make way for solar installations.

A pending high-court suit halted the clearing of 6,582 trees (comprising 3,489 large and 3,093 small Khejri, Jal, and Rohida trees) in Baiya village for an Adani Solar facility. — *PTI*

Aspirants and their families were seen waiting for hours outside NEET examination centres, including Maharani College in Bengaluru, on 3 May, with similar scenes reported across India. Large crowds stood in the heat without shelter as parents hoped for their children's success. However, on 12 May, students protesting against the NEET leak were reportedly forcibly taken away by police ***—SALAR/PTI***

Years of hard work wasted: NEET leak shatters student

The cancellation of NEET-UG 2026 has triggered nationwide outrage among aspirants, with students raising questions on competence of the National Testing Agency (NTA) and demanding that the medical entrance exam be conducted by AIIMS-Delhi.

The NTA on Tuesday cancelled the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (Undergraduate) 2026 held on 3 May amid allegations of paper leak, with the government asking the CBI to carry out a comprehensive inquiry into the "irregularities".

The examination for students seeking admission to undergraduate courses in medical colleges will now be held afresh on dates to be notified separately.

Educators in Rajasthan's Kota, a medical coaching hub, urged aspirants to remain focused on preparation and avoid rumours surrounding the exam process.

The cancellatio n of the annual test has left aspirants grappling with frustration and anxiety.

For 17-year-old Nikhil Kumar from Delhi's Chirag Dilli, the NTA's decision meant losing what he believed would have been a good score.

"My expected score was around 540, which would have given me a good chance. Now, we will have to reappear for the exam while trying to keep our preparation at its best," Kumar told PTI. A student from Delhi's Rajouri Garden, Vamika, who goes by her first name, said the development had left her mentally exhausted. "To be very honest, I am exhausted. The constant studying and pressure eventually get to you. My projected score was quite good, but now I am not sure how well I will be able to perform in the re-exam," she said. "I feel it may be better to appear again next year rather than give a half-hearted attempt now," she added.Niyati Singh from Patna said the uncertainty surrounding the examination had created immense anxiety among students.

"For the last three years, I have told myself that all my hard work will get me into a good college. But now, it feels a little fruitless. Also, what if we sit for the exam again and the paper gets leaked this time as well," Singh asked.

In Kota, students expressed disappointment over the development.

Anshita Tanwar from Indore who is preparing for NEET in Kota said she performed extremely well in NEET-UG 2026. "Now, I would have to work hard again for re-exam."

She urged the testing agency to check such incidents of fraud and paper leak.

Himansu Gautam of Bundi city, who made second attempt this time, also asked the NTA to introduce mechanism to check such incidents.

Hemant Sharma, father of a NEET aspirant, expressed deep dissatisfaction over the cancellation of the exam saying it brought distrust for the testing agency and mental agony among students and their parents.

Educators in Kota urged aspirants to remain focused on preparation for NEET.

Motion Education founder and educator Nitin Vijay described the cancellation of NEET-UG as an "unfortunate" incident. He said the decision to re-conduct the examination had naturally created stress among students, particularly those who were getting scores above 600 in mock tests.

Calling for reforms, Vijay said NEET should gradually be shifted to an online mode to strengthen transparency and paper security.

Moumita Das, A NEET aspirant from Kolkata, said the development was "simply disheartening" for both her and her parents.

"A lot of sacrifices go into preparing for an exam like NEET-UG. It takes years of discipline, not just for me but also for my parents. It is quite difficult to get back into the mindset to keep preparing when everything feels like it is falling apart," Das added.

Lamenting the cancellation of exam, a student from Dehradun said the NEET preparation involves "so many sleepless nights".

"It feels really bad. We worked so hard," the student told PTI. In Shimla, Sonakshi Pandit, sister of a NEET aspirant, questioned the credibility of the NTA. "Why should students suffer for incompetence of the NTA which failed to ensure secrecy of examination paper," Pandit, who is also preparing for NEET, said and demanded that the medical entrance exam be conducted by the AIIMS-Delhi.

"I have seen my brother working very hard for the past three years. He was expected to get 686 marks in NEET 2026 which implies that he could have been among the top three in Himachal Pradesh," she said. Talking to the PTI Videos, she said that "we are disheartened after the examination was cancelled."

Another Shimla student Medayansh, who appeared in NEET 2026, said, "The students are stressed. The examination should be re-conducted only in areas where the paper was leaked."

In Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi, aspirant Shreya Jaiswal said students spend years preparing for the medical entrance examination and its cancellation at the last moment was "deeply unfair".

"I worked hard for two years for this exam and now it feels like all our efforts have gone in vain," she said.

Another aspirant, Aakriti Rai, said students and parents were left devastated after hearing the news. "Now it feels everything has been wasted," she told PTI Videos.

A father waiting outside a coaching centre in Varanasi said such incidents hit middle-class families the hardest as they spend heavily on preparation with the hope of securing their children's future. In Prayagraj, which has emerged as a major education hub for competitive and medical entrance examinations in UP, the cancellation also triggered disappointment among students and coaching operators. Aman Rastogi, a "dropper" who dedicated an entire year solely to NEET preparation, described the development as "heartbreaking". "Those benefiting from paper leaks score well while hardworking students are left behind," he said.

Another candidate, Satyam, questioned the credibility of the NTA, saying repeated controversies over NEET paper leaks were eroding students' trust in competitive examinations. In Lucknow, aspirant Abhimanyu said, "Many aspirants are traumatised and there is still no clarity on the re-test date." *—PTI*

SALAR

Instagram can now read all your private messages

Instagram has long been a focal point for discussion about online safety ***—PTI***

As of 8 May end-to-end encryption is no longer available on direct messages on Instagram.

Meta, in announcing the policy reversal, said it had done so because few people used the feature. But this has raised questions about its impact on user privacy and whether it will improve child safety on the platform.

Instagram has long been a focal point for discussion about online safety – whether in relation to body image concerns, cyberbullying or sexual extortion. This policy change by Meta directly affects how safety and moderation are implemented in private messages.

This is important considering research has found that perpetrators first contacted roughly 23 per cent of Australian sexual extortion victims on Instagram, the second most frequent method of contact, behind Snapchat (at 50 per cent).

WHAT IS END-TO-END ENCRYPTION?

End-to-end encryption is a way of scrambling a message so only the sender's and recipient's devices can read it. The platform carrying the message, in this case Instagram, can't access it.

This same technology is present by default on WhatsApp, Signal, iMessage, and (since late 2023) Facebook Messenger.

Meta's CEO Mark Zuckerberg first promised to bring end-to-end encryption across Meta's messaging products back in 2019, under the slogan "the future is private".

Instagram tested encrypted direct messages in 2021. It rolled them out as an opt-in feature in 2023.

End-to-end encrypted direct messages never became the default, and the low adoption rate of opting in to use the feature is Meta's justification for removing it. As a spokesperson told The Guardian:

Very few people were opting in to end-to-end encrypted messaging in DMs, so we're removing this option from Instagram.

There is a circular logic to this: Meta has killed off a feature it buried so deep that most users never knew it existed, then cited low usage as the reason for its removal.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR INSTAGRAM USERS?

In practical terms, every message you send on Instagram now travels in a form Meta can read.

Meta's privacy policy lists the content of messages users send and receive among the data it collects. In principle, this enables the company to use this data to personalise features, train artificial intelligence (AI) models, and deliver targeted advertising.

While Meta has publicly committed not to train its AI models on private messages unless users actively share them with Meta AI, it has made no equivalent public commitment about advertising.

That leaves open the possibility that Meta could use unencrypted Instagram direct messages for ad targeting. And without encryption, Meta's AI commitment is now backed by policy alone, not by the technology itself.

A CLEAR REVERSAL

This reads as a clear reversal of Meta's privacy-first posture which Zuckerberg announced seven years ago.

Meta has been under sustained pressure from law enforcement, regulators and child protection organisations who argue end-to-end encryption creates spaces where platforms can't detect child sexual exploitation and grooming.

Australia's eSafety Commissioner has been clear that the deployment of end-to-end encryption "does not absolve services of responsibility for hosting or facilitating online abuse or the sharing of illegal content".

This argument deserves to be taken seriously. The harms are real and disproportionately fall on young people.

However, sexual extortion research shows perpetrators don't tend to stay on the platform where they make first contact, with more than 50 per cent of sexual extortion victims saying perpetrators asked them to switch platforms.

Meta still uses end-to-end encryption on its other platforms, such as WhatsApp and Facebook Messenger, and it needs to apply a consistent approach to child safety. Predators routinely ask victims to switch platforms, so the company's safety approach needs to work for Instagram and their end-to-end encrypted services.

A FALSE CHOICE

Meta and privacy advocates often frame this as a choice between end-to-end encryption or child safety. But that's a false choice. It's not an "either-or" situation, even if they make it sound like one.

The technology already exists to detect harmful content while keeping messages encrypted in transit. It just has to run in the right place: on the user's device, before the device encrypts and sends the message, or after it receives and decrypts it.

On-device approaches have a contested history, and any deployment must be genuinely privacy-preserving by design.

But technology companies must weigh the objection against the harms that continue to occur. A safety by design approach is needed.

On-device safety measures have been demonstrated at scale with Apple's on-device nudity detection for images sent or received via Messages, AirDrop and FaceTime. A 2025 study demonstrated high-accuracy grooming detection using Meta's AI model designed specifically for on-device deployment on mobile phones.

Recently, both Apple and Google have started to take measures towards app store–based age verification in some jurisdictions.

The highest-profile real-world deployment of these is Apple enabling device-level privacy-preserving age verification in the UK.

Social media and private messaging companies, along with operating system vendors (Microsoft, Apple, and Google), all have a role to play in ensuring harmful content is detected, whether or not end-to-end encryption is used.

Progress has been slow. But we, as a community, need to demand more from these companies. *—PTI*

LETTERS

write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

'Pure' inter-faith love fine, but luring Hindu girls a problem: RSS

- At the same time, he said, what is being referred to as 'love jihad' cannot be ignored, as such cases are being reported in large numbers and heard in courts every month. "Many girls have come back and they have told their sad stories... There are around 20,000 cases that have been documented. All these things cannot happen," he said.

Asked how he defines 'love jihad', a term often used by the Hindu right wing for companionship between a Muslim man and a Hindu woman, RSS functionary Dattatreya Hosabale said, "The thing is nobody has (defined it). Love jihad, the term, was first used by some high court judge. So it is not our contribution." ***-PTI***

No one can question "sheer pure love" even if it's between individuals of different religions, but any planned conspiracy to take away Hindu girls is definitely problematic, top RSS functionary Dattatreya Hosabale has said.

Speaking exclusively to PTI Videos, he said there are an umpteen number of cases among Swayamsevaks who have married across castes, religions and even nationalities for "pure love" and the Sangh has always accepted it as natural.

"We have welcomed, celebrated and attended those weddings," the RSS General Secretary said in a rare and free-wheeling interview.

"If it is sheer pure love, no question. When it is jihad, there is a question," he said.

Asked how he defines 'love jihad', a term often used by the Hindu right wing for companionship between a Muslim man and a Hindu woman, Hosabale said, "The thing is nobody has (defined it). Love jihad, the term, was first used by some high court judge. So it is not our contribution."

"The thing is that if two individuals are in love, then there is no religion, nationality, et cetera. So that love is pure."

But, he added, when this becomes an agenda and there is a planned conspiracy to take away Hindu girls, then it raises a question and causes friction.

"Then this DNA thing doesn't work. Because even with that (same) DNA, if somebody is hijacking a girl from some village, leave alone Muslims, it is not love," he said, referring to Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat's comments about Hindus and Muslims of India having the same DNA.

He stressed that he was not talking only about Hindu girls and it cannot be allowed even if a girl from any other community is kidnapped.

"You cannot say that 'as we belong to one DNA, it's okay'. It is not. That is why it should be a socially acceptable thing. Love is not barred in a society," he said.

Asked specifically whether he was saying that the Sangh was not against a love marriage between individuals of different faiths or communities, he said that there are many families of Swayamsevaks where people have married outside their caste, community or religion.

"We do not publicise it as we accept it as a natural thing," he said.

At the same time, he said, what is being referred to as 'love jihad' cannot be ignored, as such cases are being reported in large numbers and heard in courts every month.

"Many girls have come back and they have told their sad stories... There are around 20,000 cases that have been documented. All these things cannot happen," he said.

He also wondered whether love happens only one way. "All cases of Hindu girls and Muslim boys? So that means this love has only one dimension. Then it is not love. There is a conspiracy," he said.

On another question about Bhagwat's comments about the need for Hindus to have more children, Hosabale said it is important for family security and several other reasons.

"If there is only one child, one child norm, then if something happens to the child at some age, what will happen to the parents in their old age?

"Secondly, if there is only one child who gets all the love and everything, there is a risk that the child develops an ego or loneliness.

"Siblings help us learn love, sharing and compassion. But if a child grows without a sibling, there can be psychological problems or ego or loneliness," he said.

He added that having more children is also important for the community and the nation.

"We are creating economy, we are creating wealth, we are growing everything. But in the future, if the nation becomes a nation of old people, there would be a problem," he said while referring to Japan.

Hosabale said India is an ancient nation, but it is also a young nation even after thousands of years. "We should remain young as a nation," he said while advocating for people to have more children.

'INDIA HAS ALWAYS BEEN A HINDU NATION'

The RSS is not creating a Hindu nation because India has always been a Hindu nation, he said while asserting that non-Hindus are no different as all have the same ancestry and DNA.

"There was British Raj here, right? It was British Raj... Then also, this was a Hindu nation. It was not British nation," he added.

He said there are multiple religious groups in the country, who are often described as minorities, and none of them are second-class citizens.

"Even within the RSS, there are a number of people who are from these religious groups and who are Sangh Swayamsevaks. They are not showpieces for us," he said.

He was asked how he would assure the minorities that they are safe in India when the RSS talks about Hindutva or the Hindu nation.

Hosabale said these questions have been asked umpteen times since the founding of the RSS 100 years ago.

"When people say there is a fear, I ask what has happened? Has the Muslim number come down?

"Whether they had to flee? Whether they are treated as second-class citizens," he said. *—PTI*

TRUMP LANDS IN CHINA, TO MEET XI

Trump says don't need help with Iran, seeks to 'open China'; Beijing lists 4 red lines

BEIJING, 13 MAY

US President Donald Trump was accorded a red-carpet welcome on Wednesday upon his arrival in Beijing as he will hold talks with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping over the following two days. The talks are expected to focus on trade and tariffs, artificial intelligence and technology, Taiwan, the Iran war and rare earths and supply chains.

"I will be asking President Xi (Jinping), a leader of extraordinary distinction, to 'open up' China so that these brilliant people can work their magic, and help bring the People's Republic to an even higher level," Trump posted on Truth Social.

Incidentally, he earlier told reporters: "I don't think we need any help with Iran" and said the US will win the war "one way or the other,".

Trump was welcomed by Chinese Vice President Han Zheng at the airport, a rare honour that broke with usual diplomatic protocol. Officials say most of the top leaders visiting China, including Russian President Vladimir Putin were received by State Councillors.

Trump was greeted by a brass band, a guard of honour, and 300 Chinese youth dressed in blue and white uniforms and waving Chinese and American flags in unison, chanting in Chinese, "Welcome, welcome! Warm welcome!"

Trump then moved into his limousine, The Big Beast, flown from Washington.

Trump was joined by son Eric, his daughter-in-law Lara, and several of the US's top business leaders. However, Trump's wife Melania skipped the trip.

The last-minute addition of Nvidia's Jensen Huang to Trump's delegation is significant, as semiconductor chips are central to the US-China technology rivalry. China is bargaining for semiconductor chips for AI, while the US wants the rare-earth minerals for manufacturing mobile phones and aircraft jets. They also plan to set up a Board of Trade to address differences between the countries.

Notably, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi recently visited Beijing, to the ire of the US. China is the largest importer of Iranian oil and shares strategic defence ties with Tehran.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Embassy in the US earlier said that certain issues constitute "four red lines" that must not be challenged by Trump. These are: 'The Taiwan Question', 'Democracy and Human Rights', 'Paths and Political Systems' and 'China's Development Right.' —*PTI*

US President Donald Trump walks with China's Vice President Han Zheng during a welcome ceremony on Wednesday in Beijing —*PTI*

> **We're going to have a great relationship for many, many decades to come. As you know, President Xi will be coming here toward the end of the year. I only wish we get the ballroom finished... We have a ballroom that's under budget. I've doubled the size of it because we obviously need that.... (To a reporter) I doubled the size of it (and not the cost), you dumb person. You are not a smart person**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

TECH BROS LAND IN BEIJING

The US delegation includes a swathe of US billionaires as Trump is seemingly hoping for massive trade deals:

- **Elon Musk** (Tesla, SpaceX, X)
- **Tim Cook** (Apple)
- **Jensen Huang** (Nvidia)
- **Kelly Ortberg** (Boeing)
- **Larry Fink** (Blackrock)
- **Stephen Schwarzman** (Blackstone)
- **Dina Powell McCormick** (Meta)
- **H Lawrence Culp** (GE Aerospace)
- **David Solomon** (Goldman Sachs)
- **Michael Miebach** (Mastercard)
- **Brian Sikes** (Cargill)
- **Jane Fraser** (Citi)
- **Sanjay Mehrotra** (Micron)
- **Cristiano Amon** (Qualcomm)
- **Ryan McInerney** (Visa)

KEY AGENDA FOR TRUMP AND XI

As Trump eyes his 'Nixon in China' moment, here are some key issues that should sit on the back of his mind during his meeting with Xi.

Taiwan

China is unhappy with the US selling weapons to the sovereign country it claims as its own. Trump has hedged on the issue, but stated that he will discuss the USD 11 billion weapons package with Xi.

Nuclear arms

Trump intends to raise the idea of the US, China and Russia signing a pact that would set limits on the nuclear weapons each nation keeps in its arsenal. Trump earlier didn't review the New START treaty with Russia.

Trade

Trump stated that he hopes to make China "open up" its economy, as Washington's trade relations with Beijing have spiralled out of control recently. During Trump's trade war, tariffs went as high as three digit between the two super-

Soros to fight Muslim & Jewish hate with $30M

— WIKIPEDIA

NEW YORK, 13 MAY

George Soros' Open Society Foundations has committed USD 30 million over three years to support groups combating antisemitism and anti-Muslim hate amid rising global tensions. The initiative aims to strengthen interfaith partnerships, expand education on discrimination and support community leaders working to build trust. It will also fund efforts to safeguard lawful free speech. The move comes amid increasing violence and rhetoric targeting Jewish and Muslim communities linked to conflicts in the Middle East. "The deep injustices... are fuelling indiscriminate prejudice," said President Binaifer Nowrojee. Led by Alex Soros, the foundation will fund organisations promoting cross-community solidarity and has invited nonprofits to apply.—*PTI*

Gunfire erupts in Filipino Senate amid arrest

MANILA, 13 MAY

A burst of gunfire rang out Wednesday night in the Philippine Senate, where authorities have tried to arrest a senator, who is wanted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for a charge of crime against humanity. It wasn't immediately clear what set off the gunfire or if there were injuries in the Senate, where Sen Ronald dela Rosa has stayed in protective custody by allied senators as Philippine authorities tried to arrest him and possibly turn him over later to the ICC. On Monday, the ICC unsealed an arrest warrant for dela Rosa, a former national police chief who first enforced then president Rodrigo Duterte's anti-drug crackdowns, in which thousands of mostly petty suspects were killed between July 2016 and the end of April 2018.—*PTI*

Lula launches $2B anti-organised crime project

SAO PAULO, 13 MAY

Brazil's government on Tuesday launched an anti-organised crime programme with 11 billion reais (USD 2 billion) in funding, seen as an attempt by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva to beef up his weak public security credentials ahead of October's elections. The initiative focuses on combating arms trafficking, targeting the finances of criminal organisations, improving homicide investigations and investing in the prison system. About 1 billion reais will be spent by December. It also provides for procurement of drones, body scanners, metal detectors, cellphone signal blockers, X-ray machines, radar, DNA tracking equipment and vehicles. Lula said that he discussed security with Donald Trump.—*PTI*

Torrential rains trigger floods in Turkey, 12 hurt

ANKARA, 13 MAY

Torrential rains have triggered severe flooding in a district near Turkey's Black Sea coast, inundating homes and businesses and sweeping away cars. At least 12 people were hospitalised with minor injuries, the state-run Anadolu Agency reported. The heavy rainfall late on Tuesday caused rivers in the Havza district of Samsun province to overflow, sending waters rushing down streets, carrying vehicles and debris. Anadolu said none of the injured were in serious condition. He said the basement and ground floors of several properties were submerged. Video footage showed a driver standing on top of a truck waiting to be rescued from the flood. Firefighters, police, and disaster teams were deployed to rescue stranded residents and to clear debris. —*PTI*

US, Iran both claim to control Hormuz

RIYADH, 13 MAY

US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said on Tuesday at a Congressional hearing that the US "controls" the Strait of Hormuz "because nothing's going in that we don't allow to go in", while Iran finalised its plan for the key waterway.

Hegseth avoided specifics about the next steps in Iran. The Pentagon's top budget official told Congress that the cost of the war is close to USD 29 billion so far —up from an estimate of USD 25 billion just two weeks ago.

Trump's key aide and Republican Senator Lindsey Graham asked the Secretary if Pakistan was a reliable mediator, after reports claimed that Iran had parked a jet there.

"I don't trust Pakistan as far as I can throw them. If they actually do have Iranian aircraft parked in Pakistan bases to protect Iranian military assets, that tells me we should be looking maybe for somebody else to mediate. No wonder this damn thing is going nowhere," Graham said. Hegseth dodged the question, while Islamabad clarified that the jet was only parked at the airbase near Rawalpindi after the ceasefire.

Later on Wednesday, Iran's Foreign Policy Commission announced that it had finalised plans to "secure" the Strait. It said Iran now seeks to use the waterway for power generation, economic production, defence and security, and would ban the entry of vessels from hostile countries, according to Press TV.

Meanwhile, Israeli strikes on Lebanon killed at least 12 people, including a mother and her two children. The strikes hit seven vehicles on a major highway. —*Agencies*

Rescue workers search for survivors in the rubble of houses damaged by

Saudi also launched covert strikes on Iran: Report

RIYADH, 13 MAY

Saudi Arabia's Air Force carried out numerous, unpublicised strikes on Iran in late March, according to a report.

According to a Reuters report, this is the first time that Saudi Arabia is known to have directly attacked Iran – reflecting how Riyadh is becoming bolder in defending itself. A source said that the strikes by the Saudi Air Force were "tit-for-tat, in retaliation for when Saudi Arabia was hit."

However, Reuters said that it was unable to confirm what the specific targets were.

Both Saudi Arabia and Iran are yet to comment. However, Reuters reported that Riyadh informed Tehran of the strikes, and it was only then that an informal de-escalation took place, which was then followed by an official ceasefire.

Saudi had repeatedly said that it "reserved the right to take military actions if deemed necessary."

Notably, the Reuters report comes shortly after the Wall Street Journal reported that the United Arab Emirates had also attacked Iran, claiming that at least one of the strikes hit an oil refinery on the Lavan Island. —*ANI*

Turkey, Qatar to join Pak-Saudi's Islamic NATO?

ISLAMABAD, 13 MAY

Pakistan Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif indicated that Turkey and Qatar may join a defence pact that Pakistan has with Saudi Arabia, suggesting that the framework could evolve into a broader security pact that has preciously been dubbed as the Islamic NATO.

Pakistan, last year, had already signed a "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement" with Saudi Arabia, pledging that any aggression against either nation would be treated as an attack on both.

Asif said in an interview with Pakistani media outlet Hum News that the arrangement is being finalised.

"It will be welcoming that such an economic and defence arrangement among countries comes to our region here so that dependence on outside the region is minimised," he said. —*ANI*

King Charles III and Queen Camilla at the British Parliament during the King's Speech, on Wednesday —*X @UKPARLIAMENT*

King lays out UK agenda amid PM crisis

RIYADH, 13 MAY

The British King's annual speech outlining the UK parliamentary agenda was on Wednesday overshadowed by speculation of a ministerial coup against Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

King Charles III and Queen Camilla rode a carriage from Buckingham Palace to the Palace of Westminster in London for the State Opening of the British Parliament.

However, Starmer's second outing as PM since he led Labour Party's landslide victory in 2024 may prove to be his last. Allies of UK Health Secretary Wes Streeting say he is preparing to resign from the Cabinet for the top job, following Labour's disastrous local election last week.

"An increasingly dangerous and volatile world threatens the United Kingdom… My government will respond to this world with strength and aim to create a country that is fair for all," Charles said. "My ministers... will defend the British values of decency, tolerance and respect for difference under our common flag."

The speech outlines government's plans to table over 35 bills.

"My government will deliver on the promise of change," said Starmer, in a defiant pre-speech statement.

This followed a 16-minute meeting between Starmer and Streeting, fuelling speculation of a challenge. A candidate needs backing of 20 per cent of the parliamentary party – 81 MPs.

Meanwhile, leader of the Far Right Reform UK party Nigel Farage faces an investigation over a £5 million gift from Thailand-based crypto investor Christopher Harborne, which Farage said was for personal security. —*PTI*

Health workers race against the clock to trace the hantavirus outbreak, with reports that the Andes strain may spread to people in rare cases —*FB*

RESCUED FRENCH HANTAVIRUS PATIENT CRITICALLY ILL

PARIS, 13 MAY

A French woman infected in the deadly hantavirus outbreak on a cruise ship is critically ill and being treated with an artificial lung, a doctor at the Paris hospital attending to the sick passenger said Tuesday.

The outbreak has now reached 11 total reported cases, 9 of which have been confirmed.

Three people on the cruise died, including a Dutch couple that health officials believe were the first exposed to the virus while visiting South America.

After the evacuation of all passengers and many crew members, the MV Hondius is now sailing back to the Netherlands, where it will be cleaned and disinfected.

A total of 87 passengers and 35 crew were escorted from the ship to shore in Tenerife by personnel in full-body protective gear and breathing masks on Monday night.

Meanwhile, in Athens, the company that operates the cruise ship said it expects to know by the end of the week if the vessel will keep to its cruising schedule for the rest of the summer, as it previously indicated it would.

The company said it expects "clarity on whether the vessel will sail and the sailing schedule by the end of this week."

Hantavirus usually spreads from rodent droppings and is not easily transmitted between people. —*PTI*

Gaza ceasefire has failed to meet expectations: Board of Peace envoy

JERUSALEM, 13 MAY

Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for the International Board of Peace overseeing the Israel-Hamas ceasefire, acknowledged on Tuesday that little progress had been made. "Seven months since the ceasefire, the door to the future of Gaza is still closed. It is not what the Palestinians were promised and it is not what they deserve. And it is not giving Israel the security to move forward, as the Israeli people also want," he said. Since the Board began convening last year, little progress has been made on key tenets of the phased ceasefire, including disarming Hamas and reconstructing the destroyed enclave. —*PTI*

AMONG 10,000 OTHERS

Indian students under ICE scanner for OPT fraud

WASHINGTON, 13 MAY

The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said it has identified 10,000 foreign students, including several from India, who claim to be working for highly suspect employers by misusing the Optional Practical Training (OPT) component of their visas.

OPT allows foreign nationals who enter the United States on a student visa to work in the US for 12, or in some cases 24, months. It also allows students to transition to an H-1B visa sponsored by employers.

Addressing a press conference on Tuesday, acting Director of ICE Todd Lyons said the OPT component of the student visa programme has "become a magnet for fraud" and has been the subject of many investigations by the Department of Homeland Security.

"We've encountered cases involving espionage, biological threats, intellectual property theft, visa and employment fraud, and even scams targeting elderly Americans, all perpetrated by individuals abusing their status as students," Lyons said.

"Our nation will not tolerate security threats originating from the foreign student programme," Lyons said.

Lyons and other officials outlined how federal investigators conducted site visits, identifying, among other things, cases where OPT beneficiaries were being "managed" by employees based in India, in violation of a provision of the programme requiring US training and direction. —*PTI*

Putin tests 'most power missile' that can travel 35,000km

MOSCOW, 13 MAY

Russian President Vladimir Putin hailed the successful test of the Sarmat intercontinental ballistic missile system, calling it the "most powerful missile system in the world" and a key component of Russia's strategic deterrence capabilities.

Speaking after receiving a report via videoconference from Russia's Strategic Missile Forces Commander Sergei Karakayev on Tuesday, Putin said the Sarmat was capable of suborbital flight, giving it a range exceeding 35,000km, and claimed it could "penetrate all existing and future anti-missile defence systems". He said that that the inter-continental Samrat missile was set to be deployed by the end of the world.

Putin also referred to other weapons systems developed in recently, including the Avangard hypersonic missile system, the Kinzhal air-launched hypersonic missile, the Oreshnik medium-range missile system, and the Poseidon unmanned underwater vehicle. —*ANI*

—ANI

RBI likely to pay record dividend to govt in 2026-27

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to pay the highest-ever dividend to the government, providing the Centre with a fiscal cushion to address challenges arising from the ongoing Middle East crisis, sources said.As per the Budget documents, the Centre expects Rs 3.16 lakh crore in dividends and surpluses from the Reserve Bank of India, nationalised banks, and financial institutions in 2026-27, up about 3.75 per cent over the current fiscal. Last year the RBI made a record dividend payout of Rs 2.69 lakh crore to the central government. RBI is likely to decide about dividend quantum in its board meeting expected to be held during this month, sources said. *—PTI*

Eli Lilly to roll out Alzheimer's injection in India

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Global pharmaceutical major Eli Lilly and Company will roll out its Lormalzi injection in India this month for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease in patients with mild cognitive impairment or patients with mild dementia, a senior company official said on Wednesday. The company is bringing the injectable therapy in India at a time when the number of people living with dementia, a vast majority of those with Alzheimer's disease, is expected to double by 2036 to over 19 million, Eli Lilly and Company (India) President and General Manager, Winselow Tucker said. Lormalzi (donanemab, 350 mg/20 ml IV vial) is the first and only once monthly amyloid plaque targeting therapy. The injection can help slow the decline that may diminish cognitive ability, the company said.*—PTI*

Blackstone-backed B'luru trust raises Rs 500 cr debt

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Knowledge Realty Trust (KRT), co-sponsored by Blackstone and Bengaluru-based Sattva Group, raised Rs 500 crore through commercial papers issued on a private placement for expansion plans, as per regulatory filings. The borrowing committee of Knowledge Realty Office Management Services Pvt Ltd, manager to KRT, approved the allotment of 10,000 rupee-denominated commercial papers with a total principal amount of Rs 500 crore. The papers, allotted on 12 May, carry a tenure of upto 91 days and are proposed to be listed on BSE's wholesale debt market segment. KRT is India's largest real estate investment trust, with 29 premium office assets of 46.4 million sq ft. *—PTI*

Govt IP Catalyst to convert patents into products

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) launched the intellectual property (IP) Catalyst initiative. A unified digital gateway to strengthen India's IT ecosystem. The platform provides IP commercialisation support and as a repository for technologies developed through MeitY-supported research . Announced during the "From Patent to Product: Accelerating IP Commercialisation in Electronics & IT," conference in Delhi, MeitY Secretary S Krishnan launched the IP Catalyst initiative and its digital platform, cipie.in, which is being implemented by C-DAC Pune. The initiative aims to support the full innovation lifecycle — from research and intellectual property (IP) creation to technology transfer, commercialisation, and market deployment. *—ANI*

Govt approves Rs 37,500 crore coal gasification scheme

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved a Rs 37,500 crore incentive scheme to promote surface coal and lignite gasification projects. This initiative aims to bolster clean energy production and enhance energy security by reducing India's reliance on imported LNG, urea, and methanol; mitigating the impact of global price volatility and supply chain disruptions.

Union Information and Broadcasting Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said the projects will gasify 75 million tonnes of coal. Vaishnaw added that the country has 401 million tonnes of known coal reserves, which is enough for the next 200 years. Adding that the scheme would reduce import dependence.

India holds one of the world's largest coal reserves — 401 billion tonnes of coal and 47 billion tonnes of lignite — which accounts for over 55 per cent of the country's energy mix. Gasification of 75 million tonnes under the scheme is expected to generate Rs 6,300 crore annually, plus downstream revenue from GST and other levies.

Vaishnaw said the scheme caps financial incentives at Rs 5,000 crore per project, Rs 9,000 crore per product except synthetic natural gas and urea, and Rs 12,000 crore per entity group/

Coal gasification refers to the process of converting dry fuel into synthetic gas (syngas), which is used as an alternative fuel and helps reduce carbon emissions.

This process supports the production of methanol, fertilisers, hydrogen and chemicals, cutting reliance on imports.

Over 50 per cent of LNG is imported, and ammonia is 100 per cent imported today. While, Methanol is 80 to 90 per cent imported. *—PTI*

Gold import duty doubled: Sector braces for volatility

Industry warns of grey market; advocates for import curbs

MUMBAI, 13 MAY

The Indian jewellery industry is expecting volatility after the government on Wednesday hiked gold and silver import duties from 6 per cent to 15 per cent to curb inbound shipments of precious metals amid a rising import bill due to the West Asia crisis.

The import duty — Customs Duty, GST, and Agricultural Cess — will make gold costlier by around Rs 27,000 per 10 grams. All India Gems and Jewellery Council (GJC) chairman Rajesh Rokde said the body has called an all-associations meeting in Mumbai on Wednesday to deliberate on the recent policy decisions and decide on further action.

Retailers, however, expressed concern that limiting gold and silver imports would curb the current account deficit (CAD) more effectively than raising duties. According to exporters, a hike in import duty generally inflates prices. In recent times, despite gold prices doubling, imports have not declined proportionally. Such measures often fuel smuggling and escalate export costs, they said.

Jewellery retailer Senco Gold and Diamonds MD and CEO Suvankar Sen said, "So maybe it shall stay at these levels for around one year. Volumes might be impacted by 10-15 per cent, but value-wise, they will remain at a higher level. Consumers will buy lighter-weight jewellery," he added.

According to Dhirsons Jewellers Director Raghav Dhir, the revision in import duty is a significant policy shift, and while it will inevitably push up costs across the supply chain, it also presents a timely opportunity for consumers to rethink how they engage with gold. *—PTI*

The most affected by the duty hike will be Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, who are already struggling with the liquidity crunch *—PTI*

GOLD, SILVER IMPORTS FROM DUBAI MAY RISE AFTER DUTY HIKE: GTRI

A sharp increase in India's import duty on gold and silver from 6 per cent to 15 per cent could boost imports routed through Dubai under the India-UAE trade pact, GTRI said on Wednesday. Under the agreement, gold imported from the UAE attracts a concessional 14 per cent duty against the new 15 per cent MFN rate, while silver imports face just 7 per cent duty, widening the arbitrage gap. GTRI said the tariff differential may encourage global bullion routing through Dubai despite the UAE not being a miner of precious metals. —PTI

Gold soars by ₹8,550, silver by ₹20,500 per kg

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Gold prices soared by Rs 8,550 to a little over Rs 1.65 lakh per 10 grams on Wednesday after the government increased the import duty on precious metals to 15 per cent.

Similarly, silver prices jumped by Rs 20,500 to Rs 2,97,500 per kg from Rs 2,77,000 per kg on the previous day, according to the All India Sarafa Association.

Gold of 99.9 per cent purity increased by Rs 8,550, or over 5 per cent, to Rs 1,65,350 per 10 grams from the previous close of Rs 1,56,800 per 10 grams

Meanwhile, import duty on platinum has been raised to 15.4 per cent from 6.4 per cent.

The government on Wednesday hiked import duty on gold and silver to 15 per cent from 6 per cent. Changes have also been made to other items such as gold/silver dore and coins.

Local traders said the actual impact of the higher levy would play out over the coming days. A weak rupee also inflated the prices, analysts said. In the overseas markets, Spot gold slipped by 0.3 per cent to USD 4,700.86 per ounce while silver gained 1 per cent to USD 87.45 per ounce. *—PTI*

DUTY HIKE

India is the second-largest gold consumer after China, with demand largely driven by the jewellery industry *—PTI*

Jewellery stocks end mixed: Sky Gold falls the most, Titan gains

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

- Shares of Sky Gold and Diamonds fell the most, dropping 7.24 per cent. Meanwhile, Senco Gold rose 3.77 per cent and Titan Company gained 0.95 per cent.

Jewellery stocks ended on a mixed note on Wednesday as investors reacted to the government's sharp hike in import duties on gold and silver, raising concerns over weaker consumer demand.

The Centre increased import duties on precious metals to 15 per cent from 6 per cent as part of efforts to curb rising imports amid higher import linked to the West Asia crisis.

Shares of Sky Gold and Diamonds fell the most, dropping 7.24 per cent on the BSE. Kalyan Jewellers declined 1.85 per cent, while Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri slipped 0.22 per cent.

However, some jewellery stocks recovered during the session. Senco Gold rose 3.77 per cent, Titan Company gained 0.95 per cent and PC Jeweller edged up 0.12 per cent.

The sector has faced heavy selling pressure over the past two trading sessions following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call on Sunday for curbs on gold purchases and other austerity measures to conserve foreign exchange reserves.

India is the world's second-largest gold consumer after China, with demand largely driven by the jewellery industry. *—PTI*

Sensex, Nifty snap four-day losing streak

MUMBAI, 13 MAY

Benchmark equity indices Sensex and Nifty ended marginally higher on Wednesday, snapping a four-session losing streak, as investors resorted to bargain buying in metal, energy and consumption stocks amid supportive global cues.

However, gains were capped by a record low rupee, persistent foreign fund outflows, elevated crude oil prices and ongoing geopolitical tensions, traders said.

The 30-share BSE Sensex rose 49.74 points, or 0.07 per cent, to close at 74,608.98. During the session, it swung over 1,057 points between a high of 75,191.57 and a low of 74,134.48. The NSE Nifty gained 33.05 points, or 0.14 per cent, to end at 23,412.60.

Among Sensex gainers were Asian Paints, Tata Steel, Adani Ports, Bharat Electronics, Bharti Airtel and Larsen & Toubro. Losers included Mahindra & Mahindra, Infosys, TCS, Sun Pharma and Tech Mahindra.

Broader markets also firmed, with the BSE MidCap Select index rising 0.90 per cent and SmallCap Select index adding 0.41 per cent. Brent crude slipped 0.5 per cent to USD 107.27 per barrel.

Foreign institutional investors sold equities worth Rs 1,959.39 crore on Tuesday.

On the previous day, markets had plunged sharply, with investors losing nearly Rs 17 lakh crore over four sessions amid rising crude prices, rupee weakness and West Asia tensions. Sentiment was further impacted after Prime Minister Narendra Modi urged citizens to conserve fuel and avoid gold purchases for a year, raising concerns over tighter economic conditions. *—PTI*

Rupee crashes to record 95.80 against USD

MUMBAI, 13 MAY

The rupee slipped to an all-time low of 95.80 against the US dollar on Wednesday and settled at 95.67 near at closing, as rising crude oil prices and West Asia tensions outweighed expectations of lower dollar demand from import curbs.

Forex traders said the rupee remained Asia's worst-performing currency this year, losing over 6 per cent amid a strong dollar.

At the interbank foreign exchange market, the rupee opened at 95.52, briefly touched 95.51 and later hit an intraday low of 95.80 before closing at 95.67, only 1 paisa higher than its previous close. On Tuesday, it had already fallen 40 paise to a fresh closing low of 95.68. The dollar index rose 0.22 per cent to 98.51, adding further pressure on emerging market currencies.

Between April and May 2026, the RBI reportedly spent approximately USD 40 billion in forex reserves over four weeks to stabilise the rupee, though depreciation pressures remained.

Traders said RBI intervention and duty curbs on gold helped limit further losses, but crude oil trends continued to weigh on sentiment.

A weaker rupee is expected to raise import costs, fuel inflation, household fuel expenses, groceries, edible oils and medicines, and corporate debt burdens. Foreign institutional outflows and higher import bills are adding pressure on markets and consumption. *—Salar News*

'Nuke push faces execution challenges'

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

India's ambitious nuclear energy expansion could face major execution challenges despite strong investor interest, according to a joint report by the US-India Business Council (USIBC) and KPMG in India.

The report said India's target of achieving 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047 will depend less on policy reform and more on execution readiness, including supply chains, manufacturing, fuel systems and skilled manpower.

India plans to raise nuclear capacity from the current 8.8 GW to 22 GW by 2032. While reforms under the SHANTI Act, 2025 and the proposed Nuclear Energy Mission have opened the sector to private participation, the report warned that timely project delivery remains a key challenge.

It highlighted growing industry interest, especially in Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Bharat Small Reactors, which could support industrial heat, hydrogen production and desalination.

The report stressed the need for predictable regulation, financing frameworks, STEM investment and workforce training.

Plants generated 56,681 million units of electricity in FY25, with plant load factors above 87 per cent. *—PTI*

Vegetable oil imports up 13pc, palm oil surges

MUMBAI, 13 MAY

India's vegetable oil imports rose 13 per cent to 7.94 million tonnes in the first six months of the 2025–26 oil year (November–October), up from 7.04 million tonnes a year earlier, the Solvent Extractors Association of India said.

Imports increased 19 per cent to Rs 87,000 crore from Rs 73,000 crore. Of total imports, edible oils accounted for 7.82 million tonnes and non-edible oils 1,21,000 tonnes. Palm oil imports nearly doubled to 3.97 million tonnes from 2.74 million tonnes, while soft oils, including soybean and sunflower, fell to 3.85 million tonnes from 4.13 million tonnes.

Indonesia and Malaysia remained key palm suppliers, with Argentina, Brazil, Russia and Ukraine leading other segments.

Prices rose, with palm oil up 14–15 per cent and soybean and sunflower oils 17–22 per cent. A 9.2 per cent rupee depreciation increased costs.

Nepal exported 2,17,000 tonnes of refined oils, mainly soybean, plus sunflower, RBD palmolein and rapeseed.

Stocks rose to 2.12 million tonnes from 1.35 million tonnes. *—PTI*

AI PUSH

Uber joins Adani Group to set up its first data centre in India

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

ThGlobal ride-hailing firm Uber will establish its first data centre in India in partnership with the Adani Group, Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said on Wednesday.

The facility is expected to become operational later this year, although investment size and details are not disclosed.

The announcement follows Khosrowshahi's visit to India. In February, Adani Group outlined the country's largest integrated energy-compute commitment, a USD 100 billion investment to build AI data centres by 2035.

The group said the programme could catalyse an additional USD 80 billion in related sectors, creating a projected USD 200 billion AI infrastructure ecosystem.

Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi with Adani Group Chairman Gautam Adani *—PTI*

In October 2025, Adani Enterprises, through its joint venture AdaniConneX and Google, announced plans for India's largest AI data centre campus in Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. Google's AI hub, estimated at USD 15 billion over five years (2026–2030), will include gigawatt-scale facilities and subsea cable networks and clean energy support.

However, concerns are growing over environmental and social impacts. AI data centres require energy and water, with experts warning of rising ecological pressure.

Some existing projects have faced protests from farmers over land acquisition. Activists say communities are being pressured.

Large AI data centres can consume up to 19 million litres of water daily, equivalent to the needs of a town of 50,000 people, due to intensive cooling requirements. *—PTI*

GOVT HIKES PADDY MSP BY RS 72; SUNFLOWER OIL SEES BIG INCREASE

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

The government on Wednesday raised the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for paddy by Rs 72 to Rs 2,441 per quintal for the 2026-27 kharif marketing season, while announcing sharper hikes for pulses, oilseeds and cotton to encourage crop diversification and reduce import dependence.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved MSPs for 14 kharif crops ahead of the June sowing season.

Cotton MSP saw one of the steepest increases, with medium staple cotton rising by Rs 557 to Rs 8,267 per quintal and long staple cotton to Rs 8,667. Sunflower seed recorded the highest hike of Rs 622, taking its MSP to Rs 8,343.

Among pulses, tur MSP was raised by Rs 450 to Rs 8,450, while urad increased by Rs 400. Soyabean, sesamum and nigerseed also received major hikes.

Information Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said MSPs remain at least 50 per cent above production costs, with total farmer payouts estimated at Rs 2.60 lakh crore. *—PTI*

Asian U-20 C'ships: Shahnavaz named in Indian team

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Talented long jumper Shahnavaz Khan was on Wednesday named in the 48-member Indian team for the Asian U-20 Athletics Championships to be held in Hong Kong from 28 May. The Athletics Federation of India (AFI) selected the athletes on the basis of their performance in the domestic competitions. Shahnavaz Khan's outstanding performance of 8.23m, a national U-20 long jump record, was recorded at the just concluded 24th National Junior Athletics Federation Cup held in Karnataka. Mohammed Ashfaq (400m and relay), Nitin Gupta (5000m race walk), and Pooja (high jump) are the other prominent athletes in the national team for the continental U20 meet. Rudra Sachin Shinde (200m 4x100m relay), Mohammed Ashfaq (400m, 4x400m relay and mixed 4x400m relay).—*PTI*

Pak is preparing to bring Babar back as Test captain

KARACHI, 13 MAY

Pakistan is preparing to replace Shan Masood with Babar Azam as Test captain after the Bangladesh series, following the team's humiliating 104-run defeat in the opening Test in Dhaka on Tuesday. There has been a strong backlash in Pakistan over the team's performance and the captaincy of Masood, who also endured a disappointing outing with the bat, failing in both innings. According to a source close to the team, a campaign has begun to reinstate Babar as Test captain for the remaining matches of the World Test Championship cycle, with Pakistan still scheduled to play seven more Tests this year.—*PTI*

Sreejesh slams HI after removal as India U-21 coach

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

Former India goalkeeper and junior men's team coach PR Sreejesh on Wednesday publicly expressed his frustration over being removed from his role after just 17 months, questioning Hockey India's preference for foreign coaches despite his successful stint. In a strongly-worded social media post, Sreejesh said that his tenure was brought to an end despite winning five medals in as many tournaments during his tenure, which ended after the junior World Cup in November-December last year. Hockey India chose to advertise the post instead of extending Sreejesh's contract. He had re-applied for the job after first getting the position in August 2024.—*PTI*

PTI

Former Mohun Bagan president Bose passes away

KOLKATA, 13 MAY

Former Mohun Bagan President Swapan Sadhan Bose, fondly known as "Tutu Babu" in Kolkata's Maidan circles, has died after suffering a cardiac arrest. He was 79. Bose is survived by his sons Srinjay and Soumik. Srinjay is the current Mohun Bagan secretary. Bose, one of the most influential figures in Indian football administration, had been undergoing treatment at a private hospital here for multiple health complications. He died around 11.45 pm on Tuesday, according to family sources. His mortal remains will be kept at the Mohun Bagan club tent on Wednesday for fans and sports lovers to pay their last respects.—*PTI*

PBKS look to arrest slide against MI

Punjab needs to win at least two of their remaining games to secure a place in the top 4

DHARAMSHALA, 13 MAY

Punjab Kings will need to plug gaping holes in the bowling and fielding department as they look to stop their free-fall in the business end of the Indian Premier League against an already eliminated Mumbai Indians here on Thursday.

After bossing the first half of the tournament, the Punjab Kings have lost four games in a row and now find themselves in a precarious position in the race for the playoffs.

They need to win at least two of their remaining games to secure a place in the top four.

It was not so long ago that they were the only unbeaten team in the tournament, but such is the nature of the format and the IPL that fortunes can swing either way rather quickly. As captain Shreyas Iyer pointed out after the loss to the Delhi Capitals, the Punjab Kings only have themselves to blame for being in a difficult spot.

The in-form batting unit masked the frailties in the bowling department in the first half of the tournament, but more recently, even posting an above-par score, by Iyer's own admission, has not been enough against Delhi Capitals.

PBKS VS MI @ HP Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamshala
7.30 pm IST

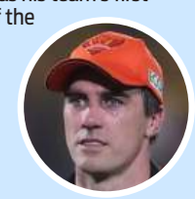
Noronha named replacement for injured Ghosh

Chennai Super Kings has selected Karnataka all-rounder Macneil Noronha as a replacement for injured all-rounder Ramakrishna Ghosh, an IPL media release stated on Wednesday.

"Chennai Super Kings (CSK) have picked a player replacement for Ramakrishna Ghosh, who injured his right foot. —*PTI*

Cummins fined for slow over rate

Sunrisers Hyderabad skipper Pat Cummins has been fined for maintaining a slow over rate in the game against the Gujarat Titans in an IPL match here. Cummins was penalised Rs 12 lakh.



"As this was his team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which pertains to minimum over-rate offences, Cummins was fined INR 12 lakhs," the IPL said in a statement. SRH suffered a crushing 82-run loss against GT at the Narendra Modi Stadium on Tuesday night. Chasing GT's 168 for five, SRH were bundled out for a paltry 86 in 14.5 overs.

IPL PLAY-OFFS RACE: GT, RCB ON COURSE FOR TOP-TWO FINISH

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

A late revival by the likes of Chennai Super Kings and Kolkata Knight Riders means there are as many as eight teams in contention for the four play-off berths with 10 days left for the league stage to wind up in the Indian Premier League.

Defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru and the consistent Gujarat Titans were expected to make the play-offs before the start of the tournament. Now, SunRisers Hyderabad too are a part of the leading pack after making a slow start to the competition.

What has been most unexpected is the rapid slide of the Punjab Kings, who have lost four games in a row and are precariously placed after dominating the first half of the league. —*PTI*

Ahmedabad set to host FIBA U-18 Asia Cup after 22 years

AHMEDABAD, 13 MAY

FIBA U-18 Asia Cup 2026 will be held in Ahmedabad from 13 to 23 August, the FIBA Regional Office-Asia announced on Thursday. Ahmedabad set to host FIBA U-18 Asia Cup after 22 years.

This will be only the third time India hosts the biennial continental youth tournament.c The top four teams from the competition will qualify for the FIBA Under-19 Basketball World Cup, which will be held in Pardubice, Czechia, from 26 June to 4 July 2027. Australia will enter the tournament as the defending champion after winning the title in Amman, Jordan, in 2024. It will be joined by fellow 2024 finalist New Zealand and 13 other teams, which will come through qualification events across FIBA Asia subzones. The 16 teams will be divided into four groups of four for the round-robin group stage. The top three teams from each group will progress to the knockout phase. The number of qualifying spots from each sub-zone will be decided through a combination of fixed slots and the performance of teams from that sub-zone in the 2024 edition. The South Asian Basketball Association qualifier will be held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, from May 25 to 29, 2026, with one team qualifying. The East Asia Basketball Association qualifier will take place in Fukuoka, Japan, from 2 to 7 June. —*PTI*

Uganda to play five one-dayers and three T20s in Mumbai

MUMBAI, 13 MAY

In a bid to strengthen the development of cricket in Uganda, the Mumbai Cricket Association (MCA) and Cricket Uganda will formally finalise a five-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) later this month. As part of the partnership between the two cricket bodies, Uganda will play five 50-over matches and three T20s in Mumbai from May 18-30.

"The MOU establishes a framework for cooperation between Cricket Uganda and one of India's most established cricket ecosystems, focusing on expanding international playing opportunities, strengthening high-performance structures, developing sustainable player pathways, enhancing technical and coaching expertise, and promoting women's cricket," a Cricket Uganda press release on Tuesday stated.

We extend our sincere appreciation to the leadership of ICC Chairman Jay Shah for facilitating this partnership with the Mumbai Cricket Association. We also thank MCA President Ajinkya Naik for his exceptional support and hospitality, including covering the costs of the initial tour accommodation, match expenses, and internal logistics, which has significantly reduced the financial burden on Cricket Uganda. —*PTI*

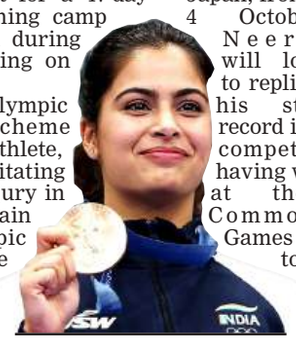
CWG AND ASIAN GAMES 2026

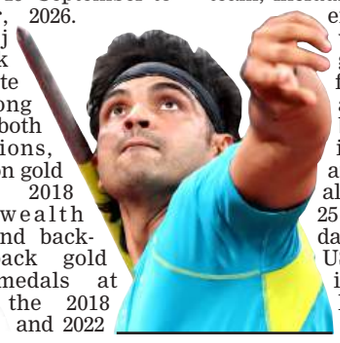
MOC approves overseas training for Neeraj Chopra, Manu

NEW DELHI, 13 MAY

With the Commonwealth Games and Asian Games around the corner, the Mission Olympic Cell (MOC) has approved overseas training for Neeraj Chopra and Manu Bhaker request for a 47-day off-season training camp in Switzerland during its 173rd meeting on Wednesday.

The Target Olympic Podium Scheme (TOPS) core athlete, who is rehabilitating from a back injury in Turkiye, will train at the Olympic Training Centre in Bienne from 25 to May 10 July as part of his preparation for the two major multi-discipline events. The Commonwealth Games will be staged in Glasgow, Scotland, from July 23 to August 2, while the Asian Games will be organised in Aichi-Nagoya, Japan, from 19 September to 4 October, 2026.



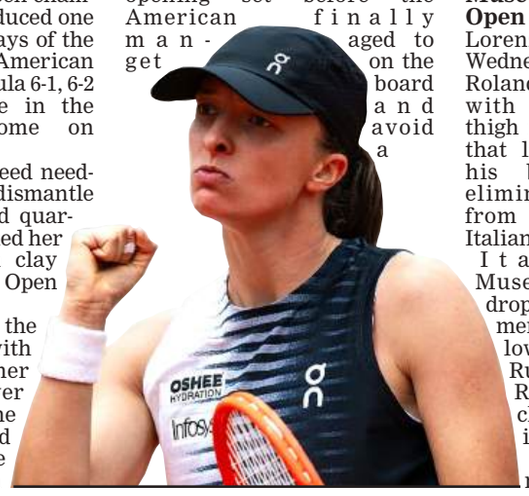


Neeraj will look to replicate his strong record in both competitions, having won gold at the 2018 Commonwealth Games and back-to-back gold medals at the 2018 and 2022 Asian Games. The 28-year-old from Haryana will be accompanied by his long-time physiotherapist, Ishaan Marwaha, and coach Jai Choudhary.

The proposal covers the travel and accommodation costs of the three-member team, including airfare, hotel expenses, food, visa, extra baggage allowance for the javelin and treatment bed, medical insurance, and an out-of-pocket allowance of USD 25 per day for 47 days, amounting to USD 1,175, approximately Rs 1.12 lakh, among others. —*PTI*

Iga sweeps past Pegula to storm into semis

ROME, 13 MAY



Three-time Italian Open champion Iga Swiatek produced one of her sharpest displays of the season to outclass American fifth seed Jessica Pegula 6-1, 6-2 and book her place in the semi-finals in Rome on Wednesday.

The Polish fourth seed needed just 67 minutes to dismantle Pegula in a one-sided quarter-final that reaffirmed her growing rhythm on clay ahead of the French Open later this month.

Swiatek came into the contest brimming with confidence after her emphatic win over Naomi Osaka in the previous round, and she wasted no time imposing herself on Pegula. The 24-year-old stormed to a 5-0 lead in the opening set before the American finally managed to get on the board and avoid a bagel.

Musetti to miss French Open 2026

Lorenzo Musetti said on Wednesday that he will miss Roland Garros with the thigh injury that led to his being eliminated from the Italian Open.

Italian Musetti will drop out of the top 10 of the men's world rankings following defeat to Casper Ruud at the last-16 stage in Rome, during which he clearly had trouble moving.

"After yesterday's match, I underwent medical examinations which revealed a rectus femoris (thigh) injury, requiring several weeks of rest and recovery," said Musetti on Instagram.

A deep run in Rome would be a timely boost for Swiatek before the start of the French Open on May 24. She had endured a frustrating outing at the Madrid Open earlier this month, where illness forced her to retire from her round-of-32 clash. —*PTI*

Pranavi Urs to make a mark on Ladies European Tour

HAMBURG, 13 MAY

The Indian trio of Pranavi Urs, Avani Prashanth, and Vani Kapoor will compete in the Amundi German Masters golf tournament, which begins here on Thursday, as they look to make their mark on the Ladies European Tour.

The tournament has steadily grown into one of the marquee stops on the LET calendar, and for Indian golf, it offers another important platform to showcase a new generation of talent alongside experienced campaigners. Among the Indians in focus will be Pranavi Urs, who continues to establish herself as one of the country's brightest prospects on the European circuit. The Mysuru golfer has shown encouraging consistency over the past two seasons and already owns multiple strong LET finishes, including a tied-third result at the Andalucia Open last year. —*PTI*

Real Betis returns to Champions League after 20 years

MADRID, 13 MAY

Real Betis is back in the Champions League after a 20-year absence. The Spanish club beat Elche 2-1 at home in the Spanish league on Tuesday night to seal fifth place and the final Champions League spot. Betis last played in the Champions League in the 2005-06 season, when it finished third in its group behind Liverpool and Chelsea. With two rounds remaining, Manuel Pellegrini's Betis opened a seven-point gap to sixth-place Celta Vigo, which earlier Tuesday lost 3-2 to Levante at home. Cucho Hernandez put Betis ahead in the ninth minute, and Pablo Fornals scored the winner in the 68th after Héctor Fort had equalized for Elche shortly before halftime. Elche, which played a man down from the 49th after Léo Pétrot was sent off, stayed close to the relegation zone. Levante moved to 16th place with its win over Vigo. Also on Tuesday, fourth-place Atletico Madrid won 2-1 at 11th-place Osasuna with goals from Ademola Lookman and Alexander Sorloth. Atletico's Marcos Llorente was sent off in the 79th. Ronaldo Enters Sixth World Cup, but Can He Bank On Saudi Performances? Cristiano Ronaldo's sixth and likely final World Cup will be the first for the Portugal great since he left Europe to play in Saudi Arabia. —*PTI*

Pablo celebrates after scoring the winning goal for Real Betis during the Spanish LaLiga match against Elche -X/@REALBETIS

GYANESHWARI BAGS TWO MEDALS AT ASIAN SENIOR WEIGHTLIFTING C'SHIP

GANDHINAGAR, 13 MAY

India's Gyaneshwari Yadav won two medals in the 53kg category at the 2026 Asian Senior Weightlifting Championships in Gandhinagar on Wednesday.

Gyaneshwari won silver in the snatch section before clinching overall bronze in the event with a combined lift of 194kg.

The gold medal in the category was claimed by China's Jinlan Zhao with a total lift of 216kg, while Vietnam's Hoai Huong Nguyen took silver with a total of 195kg.

Komal Kohar had opened India's medal count on Monday, winning bronze in the women's 48kg category.

The championships, which began on Monday at the Mahatma Mandir and Exhibition Centre, feature 178 lifters from 28 Asian nations and two Commonwealth countries and serve as a qualifying event for the 2026 Commonwealth Games. —*PTI*

THAILAND OPEN

Sindhu, Srikanth advance to 2nd round

BANGKOK, 13 MAY

Star shuttlers Kidambi Srikanth and PV Sindhu progressed to the men's and women's singles second round with straight game wins in a mixed day for India at the Thailand Open Super 500 tournament here on Wednesday.

Srikanth, a former world No. 1, stunned eighth seed Loh Kean Yew of Singapore 21-14 21-15 in 30 minutes, while Sindhu, a two-time Olympic medallist, saw off Tung Ciou-Tong of Chinese Taipei. Srikanth will face Chinese Taipei's Su Li Yang, while Sindhu will meet Denmark's Amalie Schulz in the round of 16. Ayush Shetty, a finalist at the Asia Championships, fought hard before going down 13-21 21-17 4-21 against Japan's sixth seed Kodai Naraoka, while Tharun Mannepalli lost 12-21 16-21 to another Japanese, Koki Watanabe.

Unnati Hooda and Anmol Kharb too displayed their fighting spirit before narrowly missing out against Thailand's fourth seed Pornpawee Chochuwong and second seed Chen Yu Fei of China, respectively.

While Hooda went down 21-11, 17-21, 16-21 to Chochuwong, Kharb suffered a 21-19, 13-21, 18-21 loss to the Tokyo Olympic champion. Later in the day, seventh seed Lakshya Sen, a two-time All England finalist, will take on Singapore's Jia Heng Jason Teh, while Malvika Bansod, Isharani Baruah, and Tanvi Sharma will also compete in women's singles. In mixed doubles, pairs of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto, Rohan Kapoor and Ruthvika Shivani Gadde, and Ashith Surya and Amrutha Pramuthesh are also in the fray. —*PTI*